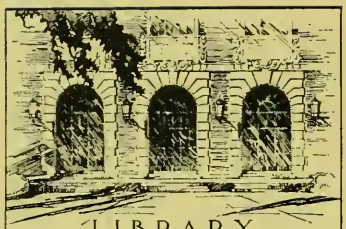

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WORKHOUSES

AND

WOMEN'S WORK.

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ALSO,

A PAPER

ON THE CONDITION OF WORKHOUSES,

READ IN THE SOCIAL ECONOMY DEPARTMENT OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE PROMOTION OF SOCIAL SCIENCE, AT BIRMINGHAM, OCTOBER, 1857.

"If any lady, either in town or country, with charitable instincts, with a vague desire after good will look round in search of some practical starting point, let her turn her eyes towards the Union Workhouse, and begin her ministrations there."—*North British Review, February*, 1857.

LONDON:
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1858.

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WORKHOUSES AND WOMEN'S WORK.

Sunshine in the Workhouse. By Mrs. G. W. Sheppard. London: Nisbet.

Metropolitan Workhouses and their Inmates. London: Longman.

Report on the Accommodation in St. Pancras Workhouse. By Henry Bence Jones, M.D., F.R.S. Presented to both Houses of Parliament by command of Her Majesty.

The Communion of Labour. By Mrs. Jameson. London: Longman.

The Institution of Kaiserswerth on the Rhine, for the Practical Training of Deaconesses. (Not Published.)

Two Letters on Girls' Schools, and on the Training of Working Women. By Mrs. Austin. London: Chapman and Hall.

TWENTY-THREE years ago the Old Poor Law was superseded by "An Act for the Amendment and better Administration of the Laws relating to the Poor in England and Wales," and people in general are satisfied with the great advantages that have been gained by the exchange. The abuses of the former system had become so glaring, that some alteration seemed to be urgently called for, if the poor of this country were not to become pauperized. To such an extent was relief afforded, that the able-bodied labourer was in the habit of applying for it to eke out his weekly wages; and should they fail altogether, he was encouraged to enter the workhouse, where we are told that he fed upon the fat of the land and indulged in luxurious idleness. It is

stated on the authority of an assistant poor-law commissioner, writing at the time of the change,*—

"The English pauper is better fed than the independent labourer; the suspected thief receives in gaol considerably more food than the pauper; the convicted thief receives still more; and the transported felon receives every day very nearly three times as much food as the honest, independent peasant. The Kentish pauper has what are called three meat days a week, in many cases four, and in some five; his bread is many degrees better than that given to our soldiers; he has vegetables at discretion; and especially in the larger workhouses it is declared with great pride 'that there is no stinting,' but that 'we gives 'em as much victuals as ever they can eat.'"

Of course they lived better than many of the ratepayers. The description of the old poor-law system is concluded with these words:—

"As a national jest-book, the history of our parishes and the contents of their ledgers stand, we must confess, unrivalled; but when we reflect that the sum total of this expenditure has annually exceeded seven millions, that the poor rates of any country are the symbol of its improvidence, and the sure signal of its distress, we must also admit that there exists in the history of our kingdom nothing more sorrowful, more discreditable, than our late poor-law system."

It will hardly be suspected that we are lamenting the close of such a state of things, or advocating in any respect a return to it. Nothing that we are at present about to suggest as a remedy or a reform was attempted under the former routine, or is incompatible with the present one.

It was no wonder that such a system came to an end, and that its gross injustice, as well as its injurious tendency, loudly demanded an alteration. An amendment was accordingly made, and has been the law in England sufficiently long for its results to be examined and fairly judged at the present day. When flagrant abuses are found to exist, it is hardly to be wondered at that a somewhat violent reaction frequently takes place in redressing them; and if over-indulgence was the fault of the old poor law, it can hardly be denied that harshness has been the characteristic of the new one. We have no doubt that it was originally framed with all due caution and deliberation, and that in the main its rules have worked beneficially for the country. But of late years a suspicion has begun to arise, that along with great benefits there exist also many evils which demand attention and remedy; evils, perhaps, not inherent in the system itself, but which have developed themselves and grown up around it in the course of years; unforeseen at the beginning,

* Sir F. B. Head—*Essays Contributed to the Quarterly Review:* see "English Charity."

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and hardly then admitting of a remedy, but becoming apparent in the progress of events and of experience.

To these evils and their proposed remedies it is now our task to direct the attention of our readers, referring them to the publications at the head of this article for fuller information upon the subject of the management of our dependent poor,—a subject strangely neglected by the public till a very recent period, considering that the well-being of more than 600,000 of our fellow-creatures is involved in the management of the workhouses of England.

The existence of a poor law, or a national provision for the poor, has been an established fact in England ever since the reign of Queen Elizabeth. It was called into existence when the system of providing for the helpless poor was done away with by the abolition of the monastic institutions of the country. Other countries have continued to manage their poor without the aid of a law, and we believe there are some persons who think these plans are preferable to our own, and hold out less encouragement to pauperism. They believe that such a state is not a necessary and unavoidable one, but the invariable consequence of improvidence and vice, and that with regard to these undesirable qualities our country is pre-eminent amongst the nations of Europe. This fact is taken as a proof that the existence of a poor law does not work favourably on the national character, but tends to lower its independence and energy. How far this is in reality the case we are not prepared to say. The poor law is at all events an acknowledged necessity in England, and without it we should find ourselves in a state of great perplexity at the present day. We will assume it to have been originally established for the relief of what we may call unavoidable misfortune, and as long as every class of society occasionally claims the assistance of its more fortunate members, the lowest class alone is not to be blamed for requiring aid. In our large and overcrowded towns especially, the numerous causes which produce loss of health, and the temporary or permanent failure of wages from that and other causes, may surely account for a large proportion of misery which may be called unavoidable; and if so, we can hardly deny that it is the duty of a Christian state to provide help for it. That prudence and foresight are to be encouraged by every means in our power (especially by the more careful education of the young of both sexes) cannot be denied; but to wait till such a consummation is attained, which would result in the absence of all poverty requiring the systematic help of the more fortunate classes, were as hopeless as to wait for the day when sanitary measures and the progress of medical science for the prevention of disease should render the erection of hospitals unnecessary, and as unreasonable as to

expect that the increase of reformatories should enable us to close our prisons. To mark the exact line of avoidable and unavoidable poverty will ever remain an impossibility; the utmost we can hope to do is to approach towards it, and by a vigilant supervision of those who are relieved, discourage as much as possible the idle and undeserving. Such an attempt seems hardly to have been made under the old system, and it is not surprising that the introduction of changes and the suppression of many abuses should have been hailed with unmixed satisfaction, and for a time all defects in the new system were overlooked. Some of the administrators of the old *régime* of course looked coldly upon innovations of any kind, but the change was generally welcomed as the means of ridding the country of a great and ever-increasing burden.

We will now proceed to make some remarks upon the different classes of misfortune, for the relief of which the poor law is intended, and which are supposed to have a right to claim its assistance. We hope to be able to shew that there *is* a class of deserving poor who are entitled to a better treatment than they at present receive in the administration of our public charity; and also, that a more efficient and discriminating management would not tend to increase, but rather to diminish, pauperism.

With regard to the persons for whom the provision of a home in the workhouse is afforded, we may quote the words of Mrs. Jameson, in her book on the *Communion of Labour*. She says, "The purpose of a workhouse is to be a refuge to the homeless, houseless, helpless poor; to night-wanderers; to orphan children; to the lame and blind; to the aged, who here lie down on their last bed to die. The number of inmates varies in different parishes at different seasons, from 400 to 1,000. In the great London unions it is generally from 1,500 to 2,000."* Assuming then that all these are not impostors or otherwise undeserving of compassion and help, we will briefly consider what is their present general condition, and what measures are taken for their welfare.

In the first place, whatever the management of workhouses may be, it is stated to be a fact, that they are less comfortable than prisons, and that the latter are preferred as places of abode by the lower classes. Magistrates and chaplains and visitors to prisons acknowledge this to be the case. The preference is

* The following list gives the number of inmates in some of the metropolitan unions on Christmas Day, 1856:—Marylebone, 1,966; St. Pancras, 1,639; Lambeth, 1,056; St. George-in-the-East, 1,205; St. Matthew, Bethnal Green, 1,110; Whitechapel, 1,044; Stepney, 1,006. Others contain numbers varying between 200 and 1,000.

"Of the 11,310 who thus closed their career not in their own homes, 6,552 died in workhouses."—*Registrar General's Report*, 1856.

openly avowed by men and women, especially the latter. What does it matter to them if the degradation of the prison is greater than the workhouse, if indeed there is much difference between the two in this respect?* The prison offers a clean and comfortable lodging, food far superior to the usual fare of the criminal, and to that of workhouses;† kind and attentive officers of a grade above those provided for the non-criminal poor. Such treatment as is too commonly received even from the porter at the workhouse-gate, would not be suffered in prison establishments, which are governed by a bench of magistrates, gentlemen by character and position, who regularly visit and inspect the buildings. With them rests the appointment of a governor, a gentleman of education and intelligence, who has the supreme command over the establishment, and, generally speaking, this important office is filled with discretion and zeal. The chaplain's is an important and conspicuous post, and lady visitors have long since been permitted to visit the female inmates.

The *Report* of the Visiting Justices of the Westminster House of Correction shews that the number of commitments from that prison to workhouses in the year 1856 was 273, and to the Coldbath Fields Prison 221. With regard especially to the boys

* In fact, the difference is rather the other way. Persons going to prison, and confessing that it was for the sake of obtaining relief, have been asked, why they did not apply for it at the workhouse? They have actually replied, "They did not like the disgrace of doing so." Yet they could commit an offence against the laws, and enter a prison, without feeling that they had contracted any degradation! We are strongly inclined to believe that it is the general management of prisons being felt to be so superior to that of workhouses, that raises them in the estimation of the lower classes, who, even the worst among them, are keenly alive to justice and fair treatment. One of the most refractory female prisoners in a large prison told the magistrates, "she knew she should receive justice from them."

The following are the salaries given respectively in prisons and workhouses:—

Prison for 900 *Prisoners.*

	PER ANNUM. £
Governor	600
Matron	125
Chaplain (with residence)	250
Assistant Chaplain, ditto	180
Surgeon	220
Gate Porter	70

And 45 paid officials besides.

Workhouse for 500 *or* 600 *Inmates.*

	PER ANNUM. £ s. d.
Master	80 0 0
Matron	50 0 0
Chaplain	100 0 0
Surgeon	78 15 0
Taskmaster	25 0 0
Gate Porter	25 0 0

No other paid official.

The salaries in workhouses vary considerably. Sometimes it is £80 for master and matron together. We believe the highest salary given is £150 for a master. A chaplain receives in some cases as little as £30.

† Whether the dietary is actually better or not, there is no doubt that the cooking is far superior, owing to the better class of officers and the more careful supervision of prisons.

and girls thus committed, the magistrates speak as follows:— "Your committee cannot but believe, if more attention were paid in workhouses to classification and other important arrangements of a reformatory character, there would be much less necessity for sending so many of the inmates to prison; and the visiting justices are strengthened in this belief from the fact of the very great difference in the numbers that are sent from some of the workhouses in comparison with others." They believe that "an increase in the criminal population must arise from familiarizing so many destitute persons with the interior of the prison;" and they further suggest, "that offences against workhouse rules should be punished by other means than imprisonment in a criminal prison; and that greater facilities should be offered to the poor and destitute, as well as to discharged prisoners, to prevent their committing offences in order to obtain an asylum." Surely if there is no other argument in favour of an amended administration of our workhouses, this alone would be sufficient. Either our prisons for criminals must be made less comfortable and attractive, or our workhouses for the non-criminal poor more so. The progress from the workhouse to the prison is a very easy and natural one. A girl who has lost her place and has no home, enters the union, and is placed with many other women, old as well as young, some of whom are far worse than herself, and is put to the usual employment of oakum picking. There is no one to give kindly advice or counsel to her; the matron is far too busy with her various household occupations; the chaplain confesses that she and her companions are beyond his reach. Such elements thrown together can hardly do otherwise than ferment, and ultimately explode. The "taskmaster" is appointed to be superintendent over this department of labour, and is virtually the only person who exercises any sort of supervision there. The treatment received from him, as may be imagined, not unfrequently leads to rebellion and abusive language; then comes the "black hole," this being the authorized means of punishment committed to masters of workhouses. If during the confinement there riotous conduct is indulged in (even singing or making noises are sometimes sufficient causes of offence), an increase of punishment is resorted to by a removal to prison, which, being found to be a more comfortable abode than the workhouse (for the reasons above stated), it is no longer an object of terror and dread, but rather of desire, to those members of our youthful population who have thus made trial of it. A more mischievous result than this, either from our misplaced philanthropy or impolitic harshness, can hardly be imagined, yet it is one that is of constant, almost weekly, occurrence.

One of the most important branches of this subject is

undoubtedly the education of the children.* The separation of the young from all possible contamination from those who are already trained in vice is one of the imperative duties of all who have the management of the poor in their hands; and this seems to be a point on which some additional legislation is called for. The question has its difficulties, but they are not such as should prevent the enforcing of some compulsory regulations with regard to it. The chief difficulty in the case of the entire separation of schools from the workhouse, seems to lie in providing for the education of the children who may enter the house with their parents for a short time. Yet it is as important to separate those children who are undergoing a course of systematic training in the schools from the children of the workhouse, as from the adults. The children of low and vicious parents who may enter for a temporary refuge would be a source of the greatest mischief, and undo much of the influence which had in the course of time been gained over the others. If there must be a choice between the two, it would be better to leave the few children without the regular instruction of a school, than to subject numbers to the evils of an education within the workhouse walls, and the many injurious influences which must arise from such a position. There is abundant evidence at all events as to the necessity of a separation in the case of unions in large towns. In Mrs. Austin's *Two Letters on Girls' Schools and on the Training of Working Women*, a very strong opinion is expressed on this point, and an interesting account given of the successful working of an attempt which has been carried on for some years in connexion with the Norwich workhouse. The advocates of these schools or "homes," as they are called, have had a great struggle both in establishing and maintaining them, and an alteration in the law which would make such separate schools compulsory, would be gladly hailed by them. Want of sufficient accommodation in the workhouse led to the establishment of these schools in the years 1850 and 1853, and the following is an extract containing an account of them by the gentleman with whom the plan originated:—†

"Many years since I was deeply impressed with the importance of industrial training for the children of my poor neighbours, especially for those who inhabited our workhouse. The system to which they were subjected was injurious to their bodily health, deleterious to their mental vigour, fatal to their souls' salvation. . . . . Against the cost of the home we must place the cost of the same children in the workhouse; from the former they invariably go to service; we could dispose of twice the number. From the latter they would never go,

* In March, 1856, there were 51,586 children in the workhouses of England and Wales; of these 12,083 were orphans.

† Appendix, p. 37.

except for self-indulgence; a vicious career of short duration, ending in despair or in a return to the workhouse, to become perpetual or thoroughly vicious paupers; so that in the case of such a girl, the cost of a life of pauperism must be carried to account. . . . . Nor let it be forgotten that we secure to these orphan and destitute children spiritual instruction, free from the distraction of ungodly companions; moral supervision, moral training and example; a knowledge of every-day duties; a comprehension of the value of well-employed hours; a perception of the evil consequences of a temporary indulgence in sin; the difference between a dwelling like this and the workhouse. We try to make this a home, and the matron a parent. The children feel that they are free agents; they learn the value of self-exertion and of an earned subsistence."*

Mrs. Austin adds :—

"Mr. G. Johnson concludes with an earnest wish that the attempt to rescue the children of workhouses from the contagion of bad example might become more general. I am told from high authority that the ratepayers almost universally resist any such attempt. This is a deplorable fact, and only shews more clearly the necessity for earnest endeavours to convince them that parsimony is, in such a case, the worst thrift."

Such "homes" as these, containing, perhaps, not more than forty girls or boys, must be far more hopeful attempts for educating the destitute children of the lowest classes than the large establishments now spreading in the neighbourhood of London for the reception of children from the various unions, and where many hundreds are congregated together in masses too great to constitute in any sense a "family."† Such numbers collected under one roof must be managed by a machinery exercised by a few paid persons, who, however efficient, can ill supply the place of relations and home affections. This want is indeed a very difficult one to be supplied, for it must be remembered that these poor children have *no homes*. There is for them no going home for the holidays, none of the happy, joyous objects for thought which fill the hearts of most children. And here, when

* Lest the plan should be objected to on the score of expense, we will subjoin a statement of the comparative cost of maintenance in the Norwich homes and in the workhouse, including washing and firing :—"In the latter, 2s. 10d. per week; in the boys' home, 2s. 3½d., which the earnings of the boy reduce by 9½d., leaving the real weekly expense 1s. 6¼d. The earnings, however, are brought in by only 15 working boys out of 64 inmates, the rest being schoolboys; so that if the earnings of the 15 boys were appropriated only to themselves, they would more than pay for their maintenance. The girls' home is 2s. 9¾d., a little less than the workhouse. There is thus a decided direct pecuniary saving effected by the establishment of institutions, of which the indirect saving, even in a temporary and worldly point of view, is incalculable."

† The numbers in the largest Metropolitan District Union Schools in the first week of January, 1856, were as follows:—Central London, 1,178; North Surrey, 667; South Metropolitan, 748; St. George-in-the-East, 404; Whitechapel, 2,992; Lambeth, 507; Stepney, 450.

judging harshly of these classes, we should do well to remember the want of all the advantages which are usually considered essential to the well-being of children. Such reflections would go far to lessen the wonder so often expressed at the results apparent in the after lives of those who have been trained in circumstances so dissimilar, and at the fact that so many act as if they were outcasts from that world and that society which has shewn so little love to them. It is a fearful and significant fact that many of the most hopeless and hardened inmates of workhouses are girls who have been brought up in the pauper schools.*

Mrs. Jameson mentions the case of a large parish union where it was reckoned that about fifty per cent. of the girls were returned to them ruined and depraved; and she gives the following testimony of a workhouse chaplain, Mr. Brewer:—

"The disorderly girls and boys in our streets are mainly the produce of the workhouse and the workhouse schools. Over them society has no hold, because they have been taught to feel that they have nothing in common with their fellow-men. Their experience is not of a home or of parents, but of a workhouse and a governor—of a prison and a gaoler as hard and rigid as either."—*Communion of Labour*, p. 113.

This was probably said of girls trained under the workhouse roof, but the result of district schools is at present less satisfactory than we should expect.

We would venture here to make the suggestion that ladies should be appointed to visit and inspect the schools, as well as the gentlemen appointed by the guardians and the Poor Law Board, and this would be an important part of the work of ladies' committees connected with workhouses. They would endeavour to gain a hold on the affections of the children by means of a personal knowledge and interest, which would not cease when they left the school, but would follow them out into their respective situations; and as these establishments must be *homes* as well as *schools*, an infusion of some kindly and cheerful elements would be most desirable. Who can tell what might be the value of a friend to many of these poor friendless ones, of whom boards of guardians are but too often the sole protectors? and how

* Extract from the *Report* of an inspector of pauper schools for 1855:—"I have been assured that the number of Kirkdale children (the district school for Liverpool) who after their discharge from the school have become inmates of the Liverpool workhouse, amounts to some hundreds, and that many of these were females under the most disgraceful circumstances. There were at one time, in the Liverpool penitentiary for fallen females, eleven Kirkdale girls, out of whom it was found necessary to dismiss four for bad conduct. . . . . More, assuredly, is practicable than has hitherto been accomplished; *but it remains to be proved whether any person can exercise a sufficient moral influence over so large a number of girls allowed to associate together in the same building.* As far as I know at present, no girls' school appears to be morally more unsuccessful in this district than the largest."

many might it not be the means of rescuing from sin and misery, or an early return to the workhouse? If such a result were attainable, it would be wise in boards of guardians to encourage rather than check a system of inspection, which women alone are able and willing to undertake.* It is well known that a large proportion of women prisoners have been reared in workhouses; and the master of a large union has stated that the pauper schools furnish a large number of the unhappy women who are abandoned to the most vicious lives. The reason is, not that they are ill cared for in these schools, but that parish children are generally orphans, or the children of profligate parents; and that after they are placed in service by their respective parishes, they, having no person to whom they can look with affection and respect, leave the places to which they have been consigned, and gradually are lost among the crowd of profligates who throng our streets.†

The possibility of carrying out an industrial system of training is the great advantage of the schools on a large scale, and the entire separation of the children from the associations of pauperism and from intercourse with their relations is insured. To some persons this last reason has appeared to be an objection, but we hardly think that it can be so considered by those who know what their relations (generally speaking) are, and what an influ-

* We cannot refrain from remarking here how important it is to secure the services of really superior and lady-like women to superintend these large establishments;—persons who would be capable of managing the household, and yet who would be looked up to with respect by the teachers, male and female (who now feel themselves the superiors in education), as well as by the guardians and other inspectors.

† Extract from Mr. G. Bowyer's *Report on Pauper Schools* for 1855:—"I have, ever since I have been an inspector, endeavoured to ascertain what was the subsequent conduct of the children who have left the school in which they were educated and trained. In some workhouses, where either the workhouse master, the schoolmaster, or the chaplain happened to take an interest in the same question (and these were generally well-conducted establishments in regard to the education and training of the children), the answers I received to my questions were definite and satisfactory. But, in the majority of instances, the only thing that was known on the subject was, whether the children returned to the workhouse or not, and what situations some of them occupied." In some of the district schools it is part of the chaplain's work to visit the children in their different situations for two years after they leave. We cannot help thinking that this is a portion of the work which might well be performed by women. Why should not ladies in each parish of the union be appointed to visit the girls, and keep up a friendly intercourse with them, which surely could be done by them as efficiently as by the chaplain, whose time must be fully occupied in the schools? Many of the boys sent out from district schools are said to be doing very well in Australia, in good situations. A proposal has been made to receive the boys and girls from these schools into our colonies, where thousands of them would be gladly employed. It would be a more hopeful experiment than that lately tried of sending out grown-up girls from our unions, after they have already been a considerable expense to their parishes, and have, many of them, acquired a sad experience of vice. The complete industrial training given to both boys and girls in these schools would fit them admirably for life in the colonies, and it would surely be a wise policy to adopt such a measure.

ence for evil they possess over the children. The occasional visits that they receive from their parents when in separate schools, must be very different from frequent association with persons who are living in the workhouse, the effects of which cannot be otherwise than evil. The opportunities of industrial training in a workhouse schools are also small; the cooking, washing, &c., for the children being performed in the "house." The cleaning of the schools is, therefore, almost the only part of industrial work that is left to be done by the girls. There are some instances where the children living in the workhouse are sent out to the national schools, and the plan is said to work well; but here again there must be the disadvantages of a home in the workhouse, and, except in a few well-managed instances, the effect of this must be injurious. These poor children, notwithstanding their many disadvantages both of mind and body, are not insensible to kindly influences, and, generally speaking, from their weakly constitutions require tender treatment. In visiting one of the largest of these establishments lately, we were told some touching anecdotes of these unfortunate little ones. In the infirmary were several in bed, victims of sad disease and neglect; one of them, almost at the close of his short life, begged for a bit of the superintendent's dinner, and added, "Please, sir, let me have it on your plate!" The sight of a different and a *coloured* plate was something that this poor child felt to be a pleasure, and it spoke to us strongly in favour of humanizing and kindly influences over even the outcasts of society. We hardly think that any sermon could be preached which would so eloquently plead the cause of labouring for the welfare and the elevation of the lowest classes, both physically, morally, and spiritually, as a visit to these homes of pauper children. Their ill-grown bodies, low and debased countenances, weak eyes, and all the other various signs of disease, the dulness of many, almost approaching to idiocy, speak but too plainly of the condition of those masses of our population from which they have sprung,—of the homes unfit for human habitation, of the drunken habits, induced probably by the state of those homes, and of all the sin and misery of the parents which are thus entailed upon a new generation, and which years of training and wholesome living are unable wholly to eradicate.

The evils of the employment of pauper nurses is dwelt upon by all who have considered the subject of workhouse management. When we consider the persons to whom such extensive power and responsibility are intrusted, in the care of 50,000 sick persons in the London workhouses alone, we can hardly wonder at what is told of the results of the system. The only way in which an employment of the inmates could be successfully carried out, would be under the constant supervision of superior persons;

but in the present system that is an impossibility. Even then the nurses to be obtained would be, generally speaking, only the worn-out remains of lives whose strength had been spent elsewhere. Efficient nurses, who could gain a living in any of our hospitals, would not be likely to offer themselves for a post in which it is nearly all work of the hardest kind, and no pay.* Incapacitated in some way, either morally or physically, they are most likely to be. One of these nurses boldly stated that she had been sixteen times in the House of Correction, and she was not ashamed of it; she was a woman given to drink, and of a violent, ungovernable temper, causing great misery to the aged people under her control. Can these women be fit to attend on the sick, the infirm, and the dying? Of course such labour is cheap, and it is desirable, if possible, to employ those who must be maintained at the cost of the parish; but in no case should they be left with the sole charge and responsibility of sick wards, as they continually are at present, without any other control than the occasional visit of the matron, bestowed at the utmost once a day, in some cases only once a week.

In the intervals the patients are absolutely and helplessly at the mercy of these women, of whom they dare not complain, knowing what treatment would be visited upon them in revenge if they did. From the complete equality of the pauper nurses and their patients, no respect is felt for them, and no authority can be exercised. Obedience, therefore, is obtained through fear and terror, and those only who have witnessed the wrangling and abuse that but too often are carried on by patients and nurses (who are sometimes girls of bad character), can imagine so sad and painful a scene. When position and character are both wanting, it is difficult to see how it should be otherwise. Seeing how careful boards of guardians are in all matters of expense, it would have been well if the recommendation of the poor law with regard to the employment of at least one paid nurse had been a law; as it is, many workhouses are without one. That such a person would always be all we could desire for so important a post we could hardly hope, from what we know of the paid nurses in hospitals, but at any rate there would be a better chance of efficiency and character than in the present plan. A suggestion was made some years ago for the training of some of the able bodied women in workhouses to the office of nurses for the sick poor; it received the sanction of the Poor Law Board, and efforts were made by the proposer, Dr. Sieveking, to give

* And it is a fact, that when able women are by chance found as nurses, the guardians often do not choose to keep them as inmates; indeed, it is not likely they will remain without more encouragement than is held out to them. If even some distinction were made in their dress, there would be more chance of their being respected by their fellow-inmates.

publicity to the plan; but it has not yet been carried into effect. Independently of the great doubt that must exist as to the possibility of forming these persons into efficient nurses, there is no machinery at present in our workhouses by which the plan could possibly be carried out. When a more numerous and efficient staff of superintendents is provided, the attempt may be made with some partial hope of success.

The want of trained and kind superintendence is as much felt in those departments called the "insane wards," as in the infirmary. Though the violently insane are not allowed to be kept for a time exceeding fourteen days, yet there are many who are considered to be sufficiently harmless to be permanent inmates. Imbeciles, and those afflicted with fits, are to be found in every workhouse. What a call there is here for all the tenderness of woman's care amongst the nurses of this most heavily-afflicted portion of the great human family! Yet what reason is there to suppose that these sufferers meet with the treatment which the utmost devotion, Christian love, and self-denying zeal alone can give? An old woman, between seventy and eighty years of age, worn out by her own hard and troubled life both in body and mind, is not the most likely person to act with tenderness and skill in such an arduous and trying post. The very incapacity of the patients to speak for themselves and complain of their grievances is a terrible temptation to tyranny and harshness on the part of those who have the care of them, and it is only a high principle of love and conscientiousness that can be a safeguard against such conduct. The asylums for idiots which already exist are found to be utterly incompetent to receive that portion of the 30,000 idiots of our population which calls for our Christian help and charity.* The burden of them in the crowded homes of poor families can hardly be conceived by those who are not personally acquainted with the circumstances, and we therefore feel that a more suitable refuge ought to be provided for them in our unions than at present exists, or is possible under the present system of nursing and inspection.† In con-

* Besides these there are the diseased and incapacitated children leaving the schools, who, unable to gain a living, must find a home in the workhouse after the age of fourteen or sixteen.

† At a recent visit of the Commissioner of Lunacy to a London workhouse, he recommended that pictures and other objects of an enlivening character should be added to the ward for the insane. We suppose this would hardly be objected to even by those who fear to make the workhouse "too comfortable." Another recommendation in the same direction was given lately by the committee of St. Luke's Hospital, that visitors, both ladies and gentlemen, should be admitted to the patients; it is encouraging to our cause to find that the following resolution was passed. These visits, it was said, "would prove a comfort to the inmates at the time, and materially assist in the united labours for the amelioration of their condition. Recent events had plainly shewn what the women of England would undertake when the objects in view were the relief of misery and the succour of the distressed."

cluding our remarks upon this portion of the subject we may quote the statistics given by Mrs. Jameson* as to the ages of pauper nurses employed in London workhouses:—

"There are seventy paid nurses, and five hundred pauper nurses and assistants. One-half of these nurses are above fifty, one-quarter above sixty, many not less than seventy, and some more than eighty years old. An extra allowance of tea or beer is the reward given for their services; but the propensity to drink is so strong, that it is with the utmost difficulty that they are kept from indulging it."

We can hardly wonder at this when we find that the habit is encouraged rather than checked by those in authority. In many workhouses it is the custom to allow the nurses a glass of gin daily, besides their portion of beer. Can we wonder that a habit thus acquired grows into drunkenness when the opportunity offers?—indeed it is inevitable that it should do so. If the nurses are so worn out by ill-health and poverty that they require such stimulants to enable them to perform their duty, it is argument enough against their efficiency. But their powers are not strengthened by a process which, it is well known, undermines health and vigour. Let them have good food and tea and coffee in sufficient quantities, and if this will not enable them to perform their work they are not fit to undertake it. Living night and day in sick wards, ill-ventilated as they generally are, may well impair powers both of body and mind, and nurses should not be required to do so. Mrs. Jameson may well remark, after an enumeration of such facts, "These are the sisters of charity to whom our sick poor are confided!"

An amended management of our workhouses is demanded chiefly on the grounds that the persons who are, and under the present state of things must be, received into them, are not all degraded and worthless.† But supposing they were of such a character, at any rate they are deserving of treatment at least as good as that bestowed upon criminals. The testimony of visitors and chaplains may be received upon this point. One of the latter says:—

"The inmates of our workhouses are not *generally* the dregs and refuse of the population, although of course a great many of these are mixed with the rest. In our workhouse of two hundred and twenty inmates only two come under the class of able-bodied men. This is probably below the general average, but it proves the mistake of treating the entire number of inmates of a workhouse with harshness, as if it was hte invariable rule that they enter it through their own fault. A

* *Communion of Labour*, p. 91.

† May we not account for the prevailing impression as to the character of workhouse inmates, by the fact that the public hear nothing of the dreary existence of the quiet and decent old people, but only of those younger inmates, whose conduct not unfrequently causes their removal to a court of justice, and thence to prison?

great portion of every workhouse should be regarded as appropriated to the reception of those aged or disabled persons who have spent their health and strength for the benefit of the community, and therefore have a claim upon it when that health and strength are gone. If, from the want of friends or relations, they are obliged to enter the workhouse, they ought to be treated with as much kindness and consideration as is compatible with their station. Experience tells me that they yearn for this more than for an increase of bodily comforts."

The public in general are but little aware of the condition in which a large portion of their fellow-creatures live; too often it is but a bare existence in which *saving* is an impossibility. The skilled artisan, mechanic, or labourer may indeed earn such wages as should provide against the evil day, and here it is where care and forethought should be diligently inculcated. But over and above these classes, there is a very large number of the miserably underpaid (perhaps educated in the first instance to no regular occupation), whose earnings cannot even suffice for their present wants. The sufferings and hardships of tailors and needlewomen, and the whole army of "slop-workers," were loudly proclaimed a few years ago, but, we fear, without much good resulting from the exposure. The system of excessive division of labour in all large establishments leads to the miserable under-payment of the employed, till the actual makers of clothing and other articles, even for Government purposes, receive such compensation as may well be considered a disgrace to a Christian nation.* We need scarcely

* The following is the testimony of a medical officer on the subject of the under-payment of needlewomen:—"Mr. Burch said he had been connected with the London Hospital for eleven years, and for five years with the Whitechapel Union. A large number of patients had been under his care, and he had carefully investigated a considerable number of cases, and was satisfied that needlewomen were the most ill-paid class of people, and the most hardworking on earth. He knew that numbers of them, with constitutions broken down, earned from 3s. to 4s. per week only, and for that very scanty pittance were compelled to work from three o'clock in the morning till ten at night."

A fact which will confirm the above testimony is taken from the *Times* of the 22nd January, 1858:—"A young woman was brought up for pledging trousers intrusted to her to make by Elias Mears. A wholesale dealer in clothes gave materials for trousers to a man named Harris, who undertook to return them finished at 1s. per pair. Harris has a machine which effectually performs the stitching portion of the labour, and for that he received one-half of the 1s., giving Mears the remainder to complete the work. Mears in turn engaged the prisoner, and furnished her with twist, thread, &c., on the understanding that she was to receive 3½d. for finishing the job; but she, as alleged, having a child to support, and a husband who had deserted her, found the pittance accruing from her labours at this price insufficient to purchase necessaries, yielded to temptation and pledged the trousers, after finishing them, for 7s. A tailor in court observed that the materials probably cost from 8s. to 9s., and would be sold at 18s. Mears, whose cadaverous features and ill-clad body indicated an equal state of poverty with the prisoner's, said he only got about three-halfpence for his share after purchasing the small materials, and he had not any money to redeem the trousers." The magistrate may well have observed that "it was clear that this was a system which gradually ground to the dust the workpeople." The following cases of distress are selected from several in Southwark:—"A widow, making shirts at 4d. each,

wonder that the end of lives so employed is spent in the receipt of charity or in the workhouse.

We have no doubt that in very many cases the fearful habit of intemperance aggravates the evils of poverty, if it is not the cause of them, but it cannot account for all the misery of the world, as long as such facts as these stand forth against us. For destitution resulting from this state of things the workhouse is the appointed refuge; no other asylum is provided on a scale adequate to meet it. In other countries the help is supplied, not by private benevolence alone, but by the assistance of Government also, for the need exists there as well as here. In the pamphlet entitled *Metropolitan Workhouses and their Inmates*,* a description is given of the "hospices" in Paris for the incurably sick and aged, which appear in a great measure to take the place of our workhouses; the management of them seems to be admirable. The following is an account of a similar institution in Malaga, shewing that even in ill-governed Spain these things are better managed than with us:—†

"There is a sort of large workhouse in this place, supported by voluntary contributions: it is called the 'Casa de Mendicidad, de Socorro, e de Maternidad.' The 'Mendicidad' department is for obstinate and notorious beggars, who are taken there by the police; the 'Socorro' for any poor who like to enter it voluntarily; the 'Maternidad' for foundlings or orphans, or for any children whose parents like to send them there. There are four sisters of mercy, belonging to the order of St. Vincent de Paul. They attend to the babies, teach the girls, and go out to nurse the sick. It was quite delightful to see the terms on which the sisters and the children were; the respect, entirely devoid of fear, that the latter have. The difference between this and that focus of corruption, an English workhouse, struck me. I know an English child of only six, who has learnt such evil habits in a workhouse and become so rooted in them, that if she had remained there a year longer I should say she must have been ruined for life. These Spanish children when they grow up go out into service, but if their mistresses do not like them, they are to be sent back to the house. If any of them wish to remain and become sisters, they may do so; but I believe the general end is they marry or go into service. Altogether, instead of being a prison like our workhouses, it was a happy home."

It is somewhat strange that English benevolence, so widely

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by hard work earns 3s. a week. Another earns a scanty subsistence by converting strips of leather into buttons for leather gaiters, being paid 1½d. per gross, consisting of thirteen dozen. By her utmost efforts she can make two gross a day, earning 1s. 6d. per week. Another makes a dozen collars for 7½d." In cases of private employment the remuneration is in many instances as bad; a poor widow, trying to maintain her family, is occupied in the making of paper bags for a large warehouse, receiving 6d. for a thousand of them, providing the paste; and when they are finished, she has to pay for their conveyance to their destination.

* P. 36. † *Practical Working of the Church in Spain.* Rev. J. Meyrick.

extended over every form of sorrow and sickness that can befal human nature, has not till late years thought of the *incurably* sick. It was probably supposed that our workhouses took this class of persons under their care, for it was known that they were not maintained in hospitals. Yet it is pitiable to think of the large number of hopelessly sick and bed-ridden who are shut up in our workhouses as they are at present constituted. The strict rules enforced in many of them as to receiving the visits of friends, is one of the reasons which causes them to be deemed little better than prisons. It has been repeatedly alleged, that if it were otherwise persons would be attracted to them, tempted to give up their homes, and thus impose upon the public charity. But at the best, and with all the improvements that can be made, there must always be a certain degree of restraint imposed upon the inmates by the rules necessary for every large establishment, which would prove a check upon any temptation to desert their homes. And it is said that in France the institutions which maintain many hundreds of the aged and infirm in greater comfort than is enjoyed in our workhouses, do not attract persons from their homes.* In England, therefore, where the love of home is pre-eminently strong, we need hardly fear that it would be the case. The regularity of hours will always be distasteful to those who have enjoyed independence all their lives; and even were the food made more palatable than it is at present, it would not be preferred to the self-chosen fare, for the sameness unavoidable in such places will always be disliked. So great is the love of liberty and choice in these matters, that working women have been known to prefer bringing their own scanty meals to their workrooms, to sharing in one general fare, though of a superior quality. In former days some provision was made for the more decent poor by the founding of almshouses, which was what may be called a "fashionable" mode of charity with our ancestors. The remarks on this subject by the late Bishop Armstrong are full of interest as bearing upon this point,† and give a very true and touching picture of what the piety of our ancestors accomplished, and what we, their descendants, are neglecting. But, like other regrets for the past, it is useless and utterly vain as regards a remedy for present evils, and in as far as it proposes to bring back a former state of things. We cannot revive the habits of bygone ages if we would, and we may, therefore, believe it to be undesirable, in the order of God's providence, to do so. Another condition of affairs is come into existence, and our present work is to see that we make the best of it, checking as far as possible the evil, and encouraging and calling out the good in it. A system incapable of such a process as this ought not to belong to a Christian society. There may still be here and there persons who

* See *Metropolitan Workhouses*, p. 44. † *Life of Bishop Armstrong*, p. 191.

will act in the spirit Bishop Armstrong describes, and, moved by the memory of the past, will found almshouses for the refuge of the deserving poor.

"Where, I often ask, are the modern almshouses; where that old spirit of love for the poor, which those who have risen in the world ought to feel for those who are at the bottom of the hill? Where are those grateful offerings of the thriving tradesman, the prosperous merchant, who has carved out his own fortune, and by a good strong head has made his way upwards in the world? Where the love of the village, or the native town, and any goodly proofs of care for the worn-out, the infirm, the decrepid, who have now to be dragged from their old haunts and homes, and crowded into the dismal unions? Alas! it is but here and there, few and far between, that modern almshouses rise up, or that successful men think of providing for the last days of the destitute. It is more common to see the 'villas,' and the 'mansions,' and the 'places in the country,' absorbing the wealth amassed in the shop or the merchant's office, and the poor are left to boards of guardians and relieving officers, to that legal provision which, however well managed on the whole, does not pretend to do more than keep body and soul together in the cheapest way.

"It always strikes me as a very sad thing, to see old folks packed off from the place where they have spent their lives; and a quantity of old people from a multitude of places, each uprooted and torn from his accustomed home, huddled together, with all the physical and mental infirmities of age, strikes me as one of the most painful spectacles in the land. A place stripped of its old folks is a melancholy place, and a place filled with them equally melancholy. A park filled with nothing but young trees is but a poor concern to look at, and one filled with nothing but old and decayed ones equally wanting in excellence. What one likes is the mixture of the two; here and there the old oak, with its topmost branches bare, and its trunk hollow, and then some stalwart timber, middle aged trees, rich in foliage, spreading their broad shadows over the grass. So with towns or villages. We want all sorts among us, young cheeks and wrinkled ones, the curly-headed lads and white-haired old men. This makes up the goodly picture of human life. But to weed out the old, to rend away all the hoary heads of the poor, to pack off the stooping forms of the aged, to bundle them into one great workhouse, as if they were so much waste material, choking up the way of younger life, to tell them, in so many words, we have no reverence for them, no care, no love or compassion, but that they are in the way, and must be done for as cheaply as can be, is sad, sad work, which will make, at last, trade wither, and our wealth turn into poverty, and all our commercial successes to be without a blessing.

"We want a different state of things from this; and those thriving men, who have well-filled purses tinkling in their pockets, who have got on in life, who have risen from being shopmen to be shopkeepers, who have the highest stool in merchants' offices, and are now sitting in bankers' parlours, and have become partners in good substantial firms, whose name is worth so much money, and who 'stand high' among

business men, would do well to consider what is here said to them about almshouses."—Pp. 191—193.

Such a custom is more common in these days amongst societies than individuals; members belonging to various trades thus combine to provide for the poorer members of their craft. This, however, can but afford partial relief, and the only remedy for the state of things which Bishop Armstrong laments, is either to give the deserving poor a more comfortable shelter in our workhouses, or to supply the aged with sufficient out-door relief to enable their relations or friends to maintain them at home. This plan is much more practicable in the country than in London, and we do not see why there it should not be universally adopted. It is there chiefly that the attachment to home makes it desirable to do so. The fireside corner of the old cottage inhabited for the greater part of a life,—the village church in which worship has been offered, and in the churchyard of which rest the relations of the aged persons,—all these things have no parallel in our crowded cities, where homes are contained in one dreary room of a narrow street or court, and where the graves of a family are probably scattered in distant cemeteries. In the midst of such families, too, it is often impossible that the sick and aged can be maintained, where father, mother, and numerous children all share the same room for sleeping and living in. For these, therefore, a more comfortable asylum should be provided.* The authoress of *Sunshine in the Workhouse* gives instances in which she has successfully arranged, by the aid of private assistance, to keep aged persons from the workhouse, and this seems to be a very legitimate mode of applying charity, and a likely means of encouraging persons to exert themselves in maintaining, at least partly, their aged relations. One shilling a week added to the 2s. 6d. allowed by the parish is found to be sufficient to keep them at home. The Bishop's picture of the assemblage of aged persons in the union is not overdrawn. Those who have not visited workhouses cannot believe how many there are in them who have absolutely no friends or relations. It is sad to see such on the "visiting days," and to hear them lament their loneliness. Are there none, therefore, to care for such as these, none to cheer the lonely heart and forlorn spirit, and be a friend to the friend-

* Extract from Mr. J. B. Browne's *Report of Pauper Schools* for 1855:—"There are many workhouses in which classification is impossible, which are, therefore, necessarily schools of vice, and which, as I conceive, the legislature would not suffer to continue open year after year if all that occurs in them were publicly known. H—— workhouse in Lancashire may not be the worst in my district because there are many so very bad that it is hard to say which is entitled to that pre-eminence." The inspection does not, therefore, seem to be a sufficient remedy for such cases as these. In some instances it takes place at intervals of one or two years. Even gross outward and material defects could hardly be discovered by such a process, and the moral state of things could not possibly be known.

less?* The general impression that exists as to the class of persons who claim parochial relief is no doubt the real cause of whatever harshness may exist in the system. It is supposed that we are called upon to support the idle and able-bodied, who might work for their living, and this belief has brought in the suspicion that all are involved in the same contamination and degradation. And for the management of such persons officials of any sort are thought to be good enough; none, indeed, but those of a lower order would be connected with the work. The system is, therefore, carried out by boards of guardians (who, generally speaking, are chosen from the lower class of tradesmen in towns, and of farmers in the country) and by relieving officers; and for the internal management of large and difficult establishments, masters and matrons also of the lower middle class are selected.† Under these circumstances it is hardly possible that

* The following description is from the graphic pen of Sir F. B. Head, and though the scene was one belonging to the state of things prior to the new poor law, yet the picture is equally true at the present time, and must be familiar to every one who has visited workhouses. In one room he finds a group of "worn-out men, with nothing to do, with nothing to cheer them, with nothing in this world to hope for, with nothing to fear: gnarled into all sorts of attitudes, they look more like pieces of ship-timber than men. In another room are seen huddled together in similar attitudes, a number of old, exhausted women, clean, tidy, but speechless and deserted. In large, airy bedrooms, we found men and women all bed-ridden. As we passed between two ranges of tressels almost touching each other, nothing was to be seen but a set of wrinkled faces, which seemed more dead than alive. Many had been lying there for years; many had been inmates of the poorhouse for fourteen, fifteen, and eighteen years; few seemed to have any disorder. They were wanting nothing, asking for nothing, waiting for nothing, but their death." Elsewhere he gives the following suggestions for the treatment of such persons:—"As to the provision for the aged, the commissioner submitted to the opinion of the meetings, that, instead of being thrown amongst children and young men and women, their comforts would be materially increased by their being kept together. He asked whether quietness was not one of the kindest charities which could be bestowed on age? *Whether a diet as well as a home, might not be provided for them properly suited to their infirmities?* and last, though not least (if there was no one to deprive them of this benefit), whether many additional comforts and indulgences might not be granted to *old people*, beyond what could or should be afforded for every description of applicants?" In the last sentence lies one of the chief suggestions which we are now urging upon the attention of our readers. It was thought that the new system would cease to attract the aged poor to the workhouse, as well as the able-bodied. It has not been found, however, that they *can* be excluded, and notwithstanding the system of repulsion rather than of attraction which has been adopted, some urgent necessity seems still to compel a large number of aged poor to seek the shelter of the union. It will be greatly for the interest of those who enter from absolute need, that persons not in such circumstances should be discouraged or excluded, for then we should lose the suspicion that all are the undeserving, or at least such as might otherwise be provided for. In some instances we have seen very praiseworthy and humane arrangements made by boards of guardians for the aged poor; one ward being set apart for the occupation of the more deserving married couples, or those who have been ratepayers in the parish; separate compartments are provided for them, and thus those who have spent their lives together are not divided at the close, but are able to nurse and tend each other to the last. It is a miserable sight, when aged couples drag out their dreary existence under the same roof, but are unable to meet or hold any communication.

† The facts that are continually being brought to light about masters of work-

the system can be otherwise than a harsh and unfeeling one. The total want of sympathy between the relievers and the relieved can produce no other result. The power and authority of masters and matrons may be considered almost unlimited; for, in some cases, they are the sole channels of communication between the poor and the guardians, and have, therefore, the power of giving their own version of everything that happens. How grossly this power is often abused will be gathered from some of the letters in *Metropolitan Workhouses*. It will hardly be believed, that in one instance the matron never spoke to one poor bed-ridden woman for two years, in revenge for an offence committed by her in simply answering a question of one of the guardians which was supposed to involve the matron in blame. Yet such a woman was thought to be capable of governing several hundred persons, and of inspiring respect at least, if not love.

We may remind our readers of the various and numerous classes of persons who come under the personal control of these officials; and we may here give a description of the first workhouse of London, the aim and intention of which was very much what it is, or rather, perhaps, should be, at the present day. "Bridewell Hospital was founded prior to, and in consequence of the want of, a national provision for the poor. It was intended as a provision for certain and specified classes of the poor, as a house of correction for vagrants and other suspected persons, and as an establishment for the training of children, when of proper age, in good occupation or science profitable to the commonwealth. It was, in fact, the *first workhouse*, the first house of correction, and the first reformatory in the kingdom; and it was intended as a relief, not only for the city of London, but for the suburbs of the same, and for the whole county of Middlesex." For an undertaking of such magnitude as is here described, some very efficient management is surely demanded. In many respects a supervision superior to that of hospitals is required, for there we have but one class of persons to deal with, viz., the bodily sick; here a variety of minds and characters as great as the

houses must have enlightened the public by this time as to the character of many of them. Bad ones are passed on from one board of guardians to another, just as servants frequently go from one family to another, their true characters concealed by their masters, who are glad to get rid of them. A very general horror is entertained by the poor of burial by "the parish." It seems to be a lingering spirit of reverence for the dead which, though often unreasonable in individual instances, we are unwilling to blame. For who can wonder at it when revelations are occasionally made like those which have recently appeared in the newspapers, of the master of a workhouse trafficking with the bodies of the dead, and changing them at the hospitals, so that friends and relations cannot be sure who it is they are following to the grave? It is a very general belief, or at least suspicion, amongst the poor that the bodies of paupers are placed in their coffins without clothing of any kind. We know that this was done a few years ago, but we cannot speak with certainty of the present time. There may well be a prejudice against pauper funerals!

different classes who are admitted, and all requiring judicious moral treatment.

The chief aim of those who have considered the subject of workhouse reform is to suggest a remedy for the present state of things in providing other influences that may impart some feeling and sympathy into the system. It is not an alteration of the system itself that is demanded, but rather the introduction of the law of love into it.

The publications we have named, excepting one, are written by women, and though they are of small dimensions, they may be taken as strong indications of a growing interest in the subject of which they treat. Women, therefore, may be said to have first enlisted public sympathy in behalf of the better management of our workhouses, as they have already done for the better management of our hospitals. And in matters connected with the poor, the sick, and the aged, it would seem to be especially the mission of women to work a reformation. In so doing, they will not only be blest themselves, but become the means of blessing to countless numbers. The object of Mrs. Jameson's book is to shew the necessity of men and women working together in the "communion of labour," and the truth of this principle is proved by the success of those institutions in which that law is obeyed. It can scarcely be said to be the case in our English workhouses, where the one matron and the pauper nurses are the sole representatives of the feminine influence so especially needed in every institution for the poor. If the theory is a true one, our disregard of it sufficiently accounts for all the failures and abuses in our institutions for the poor established by law. Poor law commissioners did not take this element into consideration in framing their new system of laws. Ladies have hitherto been told triumphantly by masters of workhouses that it is against the law that they should be admitted as visitors. Boards of guardians certainly neither contemplated nor desired the help of women in their ungracious task. They would be too tender-hearted, too sympathizing, or too meddling and interfering with that which belonged to men only. These and such like fears have haunted the minds of officials, and will continue to haunt them, for some time to come, to the exclusion of women from a large portion of what may be considered their proper sphere of work. The following remarks are made by Mrs. Jameson, in the preface to her first lecture, on "Sisters of Charity," and her wide experience of charitable institutions abroad enables her to write with confidence on the subject. Speaking of the numerous letters she has received on the subject of workhouses, she goes on to say:—

"Surely it is worth considering whether the administration of these institutions might not be improved by the aid of kindly and intelligent women sharing with the overseers the task of supervision. . . . .

Can any one doubt that the element of power, disunited from the element of Christian love, must in the long run become a hard, cold, cruel machine? and that this must *of necessity* be the result where the masculine energy acts independent of the feminine sympathies? Since it is allowed on all hands that we want institutions for the training of efficient 'sisters of charity' for all offices connected with the sick, the indigent, the fallen, and the ignorant among us, why should not our parish workhouses be made available for the purpose? In such an application of means and funds already at hand, it appears to me that there would be both good sense and economy, therefore it ought to recommend itself to our so-called practical men."

The only step hitherto made in this direction has been the appointment of committees of lady visitors in two or three instances, and this, though apparently a small measure in itself, is in fact the introduction of an entirely new principle, which may in time be developed into much good. But "what is wanted," says Mrs. Jameson, "is a domestic, permanent, and ever-present *influence*, not occasional *inspection*." Then it may be asked, Where are we to find the women trained for such works as these, for we are far from saying that every woman is fitted for them? Even those most anxious to devote themselves to them require a *training* before they can enter upon such duties, and this is not easily attainable in England. It is true that there are opportunities now which there never were before in this country for learning in hospitals those duties in the care of the sick which should be taught to all women, and a knowledge of which would render every woman more useful in her station; but there is hardly yet the opportunity of acquiring that experience in more general matters connected with the poor which can be gained in the institution of Kaiserswerth near Dusseldorf.

The interesting account of this establishment* is, it is well known, from the pen of Florence Nightingale, who acquired a great part of her practical education in the treatment of the sick within those walls, under the superintendence of the excellent Pastor Fliedner and his wife. At the present time there are one hundred and sixteen deaconesses in the institution, and according to their various inclinations and capacities they are distributed throughout the different departments of the house, devoted severally to the care of the sick, the insane, the fallen, and to the teaching of children. How admirably the plan has been carried out, and how its results have spread into distant lands, will be gathered from the pages of this pamphlet, as well as from the little book entitled, *Kaiserswerth Deaconesses*.† Such an institution is urgently required in England, and ere now we had hoped to see it arise under the experienced guidance of one who must be

* *The Institution of Kaiserswerth, on the Rhine.*

† By a Lady. (Masters.)

universally acknowledged to be the fittest to undertake so arduous a work. We still hope to see this desire accomplished, and if so, a blessing will indeed have arisen out of the sorrows and calamities of war, and one to which all classes of our countrymen and countrywomen will have contributed, by the testimonial offered to Miss Nightingale. But till such an opportunity is offered, what fitter place for learning could be found than our workhouses, which are institutions for all classes and characters amongst the poor, if learners could be admitted into them under the sanction of some intelligent and superior governing power, who would welcome assistance and co-operation, and not reject it with jealousy and fear? It is encouraging to see what a few years have done for the advocates of this cause. Those who, before Miss Nightingale's mission to the Crimea, would have loudly denounced such proceedings as preposterous and impossible, now stand up publicly to uphold them. Women's work is boldly claimed for hospitals, and in many cases earnestly sought for. Not only is a superior class of women demanded for the lower offices in them (for the Mrs. Gamps are now beginning to be thought undesirable attendants upon the sick and dying), but women of education and refinement are desired, as a religious and humanizing and refining element, amidst scenes of temptation, sorrow, and suffering. Those who have the power of looking behind the scenes, and know the truth, can tell something of the need that exists for the introduction of such a superintending power as this. Hitherto the chief supervision of our hospitals has been exercised by the matron and medical men, who can only visit the wards occasionally, and at long intervals. At other times the nurses reign supreme, and how unfit they are, generally speaking, for a rule involving matters of life and death, is now beginning to be felt, and the true remedy applied. The patients, feeling the kindness and charity which admit them into these asylums, think it ungrateful to make complaints to the medical men, whatever they may hear and see, and so, many evils exist which never reach the ears of the officials. During their presence in the wards of course all is as it should be.

It is very desirable that England should possess a training school of her own for those who wish to learn and carry out any of the various works of charity which are calling for the assistance of women.* Each nation must organize its own plans, and

* Under the present system, matrons undertake the important posts of superintending institutions containing several hundred inmates, without any previous experience of management, or even of intercourse with the poor generally. We shall never have better results till there are training institutions (which might be the workhouses), where both men and women may prepare themselves for their work, as is universally the case abroad. It seems to us that the true method of training for work is now being tried in the North-West London Preventive and Reformatory Institution, where the future masters of similar establishments are

develop them in a national manner, if the result is to be successful. Germany has her "deaconesses," France and Italy their "sisters of charity" and of "mercy." In England we have also some institutions of "sisters," but it may be that here no general title will be given to those who volunteer for such works as these. "Lady superintendent," "lady nurses," "nursing sisters," are some of the names which have been already assumed, and which appear to be suited to our English tastes and habits. Those which have too much resemblance to the orders of the Romish Church have been rejected, for obvious reasons, for it is very desirable to avoid all suspicion of imitating the errors of those who carry out these good works abroad. It is clearly shewn, however, in the pamphlet on Kaiserswerth, that the original institution of such societies of women is derived from the primitive Church, and that Protestants have since then carried them out. It may be well to quote the remarks which bear upon this point:—

"We see, in the very first times of Christianity, an apostolical institution for the employment of woman's powers directly in the service of God. We find them employed as 'servants of the Church.' We read in the Epistle to the Romans of a 'deaconess,' as in the Acts of the Apostles of 'deacons.' Not only men were employed in the service of the sick and poor, but also women. In the fourth century, St. Chrysostom speaks of forty deaconesses of Constantinople. We find them in the

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trained in the midst of the work, and amongst the persons whom they are hereafter to govern. Sir F. B. Head says:—"The central board has no power to punish the vicious, no right to revile the improvident, no authority to neglect the impotent. Their wants alone constitute their legal passport to relief; it is to be administered to them with an equal attention to generosity on the one hand, and justice on the other." Surely, therefore, this being the case, it is more important to provide some government that is capable of exercising a moral influence and discrimination in matters connected with the poor. "It is essential to woman's success in undertaking any higher employment, to wit, that she must undergo special training for her work, as any one of the other sex must undergo special training for his work. Dilettante visiting, desultory fits of charity, must give way to serious application, laborious preparation, and long study."— *Industrial and Social Position of Women*, p. 280.

As long as masters and matrons must (generally speaking) be husband and wife, it is hardly probable that both should be well fitted for their work, which, we repeat again, demands an especial training and devotion. Mrs. Jameson* has remarked upon what she calls the "morale of dress," and its influence on all ranks. She justly censures the tawdry and unsuitable attire adopted by *nurses* when no uniform costume is provided. We cannot help alluding to the no less unsuitable style of dress worn by *matrons*. The governor of a large prison has expressed his conviction that a great proportion of crime amongst female prisoners has its origin in *a love of dress and finery*. Can it be wise, therefore, to allow matrons to deck themselves out with gay ribbons and artificial flowers in the eyes of those very persons to whom we wish to make them objects of respect and examples of modesty? Those who have seen and admired the perfectly neat and simple costume worn by the deaconesses of Kaiserswerth, as well as by their excellent "mother," Madame Fliedner, may understand something of the moral influence which may be exercised even in such apparently trifling matters as these, and make comparisons not flattering to ourselves at home.

* *Communion of Labour*, p. 96.

Western Church as late as the eighth, in the Eastern as the twelfth century. When the Waldenses and the Bohemian and Moravian Brothers began to arise out of the night of the middle ages, we find in these communities, founded after the model of the apostolical institutions, the office of deaconesses, who were called presbyters, established in 1457. In the sixteenth century it is well known how Robert von der Mark, Prince of Sedan in the Netherlands, revived the institution of Protestant Sisters of Charity, and, instead of appropriating the revenues of the suppressed monasteries in his domains, devoted them to this purpose. In the first General Synod of the Evangelical Church of the Lower Rhine and the Netherlands, at Wesel, 1568, we find the office of deaconesses recommended, and in the Classical Synod of 1580, expressly established. In England they were not wanting. Among the Nonconformists, under Elizabeth, 1578, deaconesses were instituted during Divine service, and received amidst the general prayer of the community. The Pilgrim Fathers of 1602—1625, who were driven first to Amsterdam and Leyden, then to North America, carried their deaconesses with them. It thus appears that, long previous to the establishment of the orders of Sisters of Mercy by St. Vincent de Paul in 1633, the importance of the office of deaconess had been recognised by all divisions of Christians, and they accordingly existed free from vows or cloistered cells.

"So many believe this to be an institution borrowed from the Roman Catholic Church exclusively, and on that account are prejudiced against it, that we wish we had space to give the numerous other proofs of the existence of the office at different times, among all Churches, and earliest in those of the Protestant faith."

The following reason why the institution did not spread and flourish further in those days may equally account for the fact at the present day:—"There were no nursery grounds, preparatory schools for deaconesses, so that fitness for their office was, so to speak, accidental." The want has long been supplied in Protestant countries abroad; we trust we may soon be able to say that England has followed their example. The essentially Protestant title of "deaconess" has not been adopted here, though from its having belonged to the early primitive Church, as well as to the simple Protestants of later times, it would seem to be very unobjectionable. And there is much in the system carried out by these Protestant societies that would be well worthy of our imitation. The simple but solemn consecration of the deaconess to her work,* involving no vows and no compulsion, gives a sanction and a degree of sanctity to it and to the labourer in the eyes of others, that it would be very desirable to cast around those who are exposed to so many temptations as the nurses in our public hospitals. It would be very desirable to have such respect shewn to them in the

* The beautiful service for Ordination is given in the Appendix to *Kaiserswerth Deaconesses*, and we earnestly recommend it to the attention of our readers.

exercise of their office as we find abroad, where the physician lifts his hat to the humblest sister in the hospital. Such homage will hardly be yielded here unless more reverence is paid to the office and calling of a nurse than at present.

It is a good and hopeful sign that we are not disposed to imitate literally the customs of other countries, but rather to frame some mode of action which may be the national expression of the English mind. It is also a natural sign that help should be forthcoming with the need for it; that without any preconceived plan or system, workers should arise when they are needed. This has already been the case in emergencies, but the want of systematic training has been felt nevertheless, and spontaneous and zealous efforts alone will not suffice. As long as no systematic training is afforded we cannot wonder if many mistakes are made, and scattered and impulsive efforts here and there start up.* The training which is given in the other countries of Europe proves the importance attached to the work, which is not to be undertaken lightly or without a due preparation, lasting for three, five, or even seven years. In England, where no vows or devotion for life would attend this training, it would be most desirable that women in general should be able to avail themselves of it, as well as those who intend to devote themselves exclusively to this work in after life. It might be made supplementary to the common school education, and in many respects it would be the most important part of it. A year spent in learning how to nurse the sick and take care of children, besides other matters of intercourse with the poor, would be a most valuable preparation for after life, wherever it might be spent. To those who were to become the wives of clergymen this training would be especially acceptable, and we might then hope to see fewer of such examples as are exhibited in the clever sketches of the *Owlet of Owlstone Edge*. There are many others also who would have reason to bless the preparation for their duties which this training would afford. Persons high in position in our colonies, now scattered over the globe, and settlers in new countries everywhere, may be called upon to perform duties for which the usual education of girls' schools in the common routine of learning and accomplishments would be quite useless. But whether at home or abroad, practical know-

* The following notice of proceedings in the recent meeting of Convocation (February, 1858) gives this proposal, which seems to shew that women's work is beginning to take its place in the minds of the most serious. It was proposed, "That this house do agree to present to his grace the Archbishop and to the Bishops of the Upper House, a respectful address, praying their lordships to deliberate and agree on certain rules by which women, whose hearts God has moved to devote themselves exclusively to works of piety and charity, may be associated on terms and conditions distinctly known as those which the Church of England has sanctioned and prescribed."

ledge of this kind will always be desirable, if not absolutely necessary for the due fulfilment of a large portion of women's duties. It is now become the fashion to advocate the industrial training of girls of the lower classes. The need of it is nearly as great amongst the upper. A woman's life cannot be passed in either acquiring or displaying accomplishments, or even in the higher pursuit of learning for its own sake. A time of longing for practical work comes to all, and is at the root of the strenuous efforts after a married life which are made by the generality of young ladies after leaving school. The most natural field for woman's capacities is without doubt the management of a household and family, and there are some persons who maintain this to be the only legitimate and natural occupation of woman. It may be so. But there are many unnatural things in this world, things which are diverted from their original design and intention. And amongst them may perhaps be considered the fact that there are no fewer than 500,000 more women than men in this country, and who are NOT occupied with the care of their own families.* Unnatural as this fact may be, we still ask for work for them to do, believing that many are longing and willing to do it, if it were possible to bring them and it together. Hitherto the customs of our country, and public opinion, the strongest of all barriers, has been against the opening out of any new line of action. But "the Chinese wall of prejudices" has, as Mrs. Jameson observes, at last been broken through, and the field is open to volunteers. Another generation, however, must grow up before it will be fully occupied, for many obstacles still exist, and many habits have to be overcome. None are asked to leave their homes, or the duties which are already placed before them, for the work that we are advocating; but it is offered to those who are standing all the day idle, and whom no man hath yet hired for the great work of life. It is not only to ladies that such employments would be found to be acceptable, but also to that large middle class of women who now go to swell the ranks of underpaid governesses and needlewomen. At present this class is widely separated from the poor and from works of charity in general. There is but little sympathy found for such in the daughters of tradesmen, who have it in their power to do so much in this field of work if they had but the inclination. Young women of this class do not now, as formerly, occupy themselves exclusively with household drudgery, as it is called, and no longer follow the good old paths

* "Take of these 500,000 superfluous women only the one-hundredth part, say 5,000 women, who are willing to work for good, to join the communion of labour, under a directing power, if only they knew how—if only they could learn how best to do their work, and if employment were open to them, what a phalanx it would be if properly organized!"—*Sisters of Charity*, p. 61.

of their grandmothers in the care of the house and family. It has always seemed to us, therefore, that their time must be in a great measure their own. What a valuable staff of assistants might they not prove in a parish, if their training had given them some feeling for and sympathy with the poor! Such a character as is depicted in the beautiful tale of *Katharine Ashton* has, we suspect, but few corresponding realities in the world of tradesmen's daughters. Happy would it be for themselves and others if it had more. The education that gives a smattering of learning and accomplishments which can never be of use either in teaching others or in refining their own minds, is all which seems hitherto to have been desired by this class of women. But it must be said in excuse that hardly any other education has been possible for them. The only teachers who have offered themselves were half educated persons of their own class, compelled to earn a precarious and scanty living in this manner; love and devotion, and even capacity for the work, being generally wholly wanting. We trust, however, that a better day is dawning upon this most important but long-neglected branch of education, and that ere long we may see many efforts successfully carried out in the way of improvement. The gradual advance in middle class schools is as needful amongst boys as girls, if we would look for more enlightenment and intelligent benevolence amongst our future guardians of the poor and ratepayers, who have so much power in their hands as regards the management of the class whose grievances we have been considering.

At the present time in England we are unable to find workers for the comparatively few spheres in which their help is called for. We have no source to which we can send with the certainty of obtaining a supply. In the other countries of Europe, where orders of women devoted to the care of the poor and sick have long been organized, some "mother house" is always ready to provide the help that is asked from it. And here we are induced to inquire how it is that France and Italy, where the education of women is so greatly inferior to that of our own high standard, produce women of tact, discretion, and mental powers equal to the government of communities of their own sex, and of charitable establishments of the most varied and difficult character? Such communities must be as liable to division and dissension arising from the evil tempers of human nature in one country as another, yet they exist, and have done so for centuries. In Mrs. Jameson's *Communion of Labour*, accounts are given of hospitals, penitentiaries, and even prisons, which are managed by women. A remarkable prison near Vienna is described, containing two hundred of the most degraded female criminals, which was under the government of twelve women, no male officials residing in the house. And there are numerous

establishments in which women are not only the attendants, but the actual heads and governors. At Turin is a "Female Community," consisting of four hundred members, women of all ages, maintaining themselves by their united labour, and they are ruled by a superior elected from among themselves; they live in unity and peace under this controlling power, and have existed as a community for a century. Whatever the system may be, there must be great individual power and talent necessary to maintain such a government as this. The common school-girl training would hardly suffice here. The characters that could form and carry on these works will be made in spite of, rather than by, it, for merely benevolent impulses or sentimental charity are not equal to such demands. The difficulty in England will probably be found to be the necessity of obedience to rules and to a supreme power. Obedience implies confidence in, and reverence for, the power which claims it; a blind submission the best amongst us are not inclined to yield, and till women are duly trained to become the superintendents of others, and fitted for the special work they are to carry on, we cannot hope for success.

Looking forward into the future, we can picture to ourselves a Model Workhouse; but whether the vision will be realized in ten, twenty, or fifty years, we cannot say. Mrs. Jameson, in speaking of the progress of such matters in England, says,* "For about ten years, perhaps, the means of carrying it out may be considered and debated; in another ten years some plan will be proposed; and in another ten years perhaps adopted; for such is the usual progress of any great moral movement in 'that other public,'" whom we must influence.

We can but endeavour to hasten its advent by shewing the necessity of a change in the present system, not by exaggerating its defects, but by exhibiting its true working. At the head of such a workhouse should be a woman of education, judgment, and, above all, of religious devotion to her work; with a heart full of love for young and old, sick and poor, because they are a sacred charge committed to her care. And for this superintendence a woman would seem to be the fittest person, comprising as it does, the sick and aged, children, the outcast, and the fallen. But in the due adjustment of the "Communion of Labour" (from the forgetfulness of which law our errors hitherto have arisen), the lady superintendent (as she might be fitly called) must have the assistance of the other sex in her arduous labours. We might hope that to such a person gain would not be an object, therefore additional expense would not be incurred here;† but the

* *Sisters of Charity*, p. 66.

† We have no expectation that this will be immediately, or ever universally, possible. Meantime, we may try the plan of placing persons of superior power and

appointment of one who should correspond to the secretaries of our hospitals, with a salary superior to that which is now given to the masters of workhouses, would prove to be money well spent in the end. He would take the superintendence of financial matters, and exercise authority over the male departments of the house.* Then, as in prisons, the chaplain should be a much more important person than at present, either resident, or at least with no other duties to occupy his time, which should be entirely devoted to the inmates in cases where the numbers amount to many hundreds. At present, the chaplain's office is often filled in the most unsatisfactory manner. The wards cannot be visited more than once or twice a week, when he comes in and reads a prayer to all the inmates of a ward at once; he probably then asks the master if "anything particular" is wanted in the population of seven or eight hundred, or it may be even more, of sick, dying, and vicious persons under his care, and hearing that "nothing particular" *is* wanted, he hurries off to a parish containing some thousands, who are also in his charge, and where he probably will find "something particular" to do.† This part of the subject is also beginning to excite attention, and a "ratepayer" has lately written to a country newspaper, to urge the appointment of a chaplain on the same terms, and with the same advantages, as those offered in prisons. Such a task as we have described could not be carried out by any one superintendent alone. There must be many fellow-workers with her, both men and women, who will be the responsible heads of each separate department of the house. Under such a superintendence as this, why should not girls be trained to fulfil all the duties of the laundry and the kitchen, and so be fitted for respectable service, instead of being left the whole day to their own evil and idle gossip, as they sit over their oakum picking, unchecked by any superior authority, or by the presence of any one above them in position?‡ The band of workers within doors would be cheered

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intelligence over these establishments, by raising the salaries given to masters and matrons.

* In large establishments the appointment of a steward or storekeeper would be necessary, and economical in preventing waste.

† We thankfully admit that there are many honourable exceptions to this description, in devoted and hard-working chaplains of unions, to whom the inmates look as their only friend. But when other and important duties interfere it is impossible that the time should be given to this work which it requires. Inexperienced young men, to whom the salary would often be as good as that of a curacy, are not considered fitted for the post.

‡ To the idle and able-bodied the workhouse should be really a place of hard work, which can only be enforced amongst the women by an efficient superintendence of their own sex. Why should the strong girls be allowed to wander up and down passages, or sit about on the stairs gossiping with one another, as every visitor to a workhouse knows they do at present, when the matron's eye is not upon them? The regular workers in the different departments of the house do

and encouraged by the addition of "lady visitors," who would infuse new life and energy into the work.* Their assistance might also be extended to the out-door department, where it would be most valuable in discovering and checking imposture, as well as in softening the harsh treatment of the relieving officers towards the decent poor. We care not what name be given to such an association of workers, so that the work done be a reality. The fact of several women combining to carry out a task obviously impossible to one person, need not imply any adherence to particular opinions or to a party; and we believe that it would prove attractive to many who do not wish to devote themselves exclusively either to the care of the sick or to the education of the young. We admit, however, that no such work could be carried out or sustained without it was supported by a strong religious devotion and zeal.

Until some such plan as this which we have attempted to sketch out is adopted, we shall not wonder if our great palace or prison-like unions continue to be regarded with scorn by those who see our ostentatious displays of charity, made without a comprehension of the only true principles on which they can be successfully carried out. And let us observe that these abodes of poverty are regarded with hatred and dread, not by the idle and vicious, whom we might wish to deter from partaking of the charity of the nation, but by the decent, the helpless and afflicted poor, who have no other refuge than that which is offered them within the dreary walls of the union.

Let there be justice, stern and uncompromising, for the offender and those who will not work, but let there be discrimination between such and the large class of applicants on whose claims we have dealt in the preceding pages. At all events, let it not be made for any a degrading and deteriorating system; and to prevent this, we must enforce a complete classification and an efficient

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not like to be interrupted by their desultory and imperfect assistance; there is the more need, therefore, for some special care and training for them.

* We are glad to hear of instances in which ladies and gentlemen are beginning to visit workhouses on Sundays, for the purpose of reading and praying with those (the larger number in every workhouse) who are unable to attend the chapel services. In one case some young men, under the sanction of the chaplain, attend for this purpose, and much gratitude is expressed for this work, especially by those inmates who have been long deprived of hearing the Church prayers. Where the chaplain has Sunday duties elsewhere, it is impossible for him to visit the wards. We do not yet acknowledge as we ought how highly *voluntary work* is appreciated by the poor and afflicted. They know that the clergy in parishes and chaplains in institutions are *paid* for their ministrations amongst them, but the visit arising solely from the motive of sympathy and love works with greater influence upon the heart.

At the recent inspection (if we may so call it) of the vast parish of Islington, by the Bishop of London, it was cheering to find that the *workhouse* was not forgotten, and that the sick and forlorn inmates had the comfort of seeing, and hearing words of exhortation from, the chief pastor of the diocese.

superintendence.* The subject has been little thought of hitherto, for it has been considered one of the settled facts that the system worked well enough and needed no improvement. Now we have no longer the excuse that its defects are unknown, for at the present day all our social faults and miseries are dragged forth to light; we regard it as a hopeful sign of increasing interest that a sub-committee has been appointed in the Social Economy Department of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, for the special consideration of the subject of workhouse management; and when once we are convinced of an error, and have in due time attempted to apply a remedy, we do not often relapse into it. A step once made is a step gained, and from it we may hope to advance to another. In this instance the first step may be considered to be the appointment of lady visitors in a few instances, which we may hope will gradually become more numerous.

This plan may do much, but nothing but all-pervading influence of a higher kind can fully meet the evils we have been considering. A pamphlet entitled the *Duty of Workhouse Visitation, and How to do it*,† dwells chiefly on the point of lady visitors for the purpose of spiritual instruction and consolation to the inmates, and even this would be a great gain, but it is not all that we would aim at accomplishing in our task of reform. Such gross neglect and abuse of power as are described in the *Report* of the St. Pancras workhouse, drawn up by Dr. Bence Jones, call more loudly for redress than any such plan alone could offer. A perusal of this paper, or even a glance at it, will convince our readers that we have magnified none of the evils we have stated. It is indeed a disgrace to the history of a Christian country in the nineteenth century to have statements like these displayed to the eyes of the world. Dr. Bence Jones concludes with these words:—"Such a state of things ought not to be tolerated by the Government." The first step to be taken in the correction of evils of such magnitude must be the appointment of guardians who will see and correct abuses; indeed, this seems to be as absolutely necessary to any improvement in the system as the selection of a better class of superintendents. On this point we may direct attention to a suggestion in which the

* We have hardly left ourselves space to enter on the subject of the employment of inmates of workhouses. The object was treated in a paper sent to the Meeting for Social Science at Birmingham, by Mrs. De Morgan. The plans suggested are partly carried out in some workhouses, where tailors and shoemakers are employed to superintend the work of the inmates, and where the making of bread for the establishment is done in the house; wood-chopping is also provided as an occupation. Mrs. De Morgan also suggests the practicability of slightly remunerative employment, and especially urges industrial training for the young, so that "workhouses, from being the lowest step on the downward ladder, might form the first of an ascending scale, and arrest the idle and vicious in their certain course to prison."

† Nisbet.

true remedy is pointed out.* If the more respectable inhabitants of a parish would interest themselves in the election of guardians, and moreover would become guardians themselves, the power would no longer be left in the hands of the very incompetent persons who, generally speaking, at present exercise it. And we may ask, why should not gentlemen be found who would devote time to the management of workhouses as well as of hospitals and other charitable institutions? †

We have endeavoured to point out some of the remedies which appear to be within our reach; and in directing the attention of women to the field of work which lies before them, we would remind them that the benefit of their entering it will not be for the poor only. The life spent for others will be at least as happy and as healthful as that of the solitary "old maid," who dwells upon her own petty sorrows and ailments (and perhaps creates them) because she has no other object for her thoughts and no call for her affections. Here is work waiting for her to do. Let her come forward and claim it. Let it not be said that there are no "sisters of charity" here, as in other lands, but let us prove that we also have hands and hearts willing to serve in the same cause. And there is ample variety offered for all tastes and capacities. There are young and old, sick and healthy, pious and vicious, all needing the skilful and judicious care of the well trained and educated mind. It is a sad instance of the ignorant prejudice which is ever opposed to the introduction of change and improvement, that even where help of this kind is offered, it is still obstinately rejected, for men have not yet learnt to see that it is for their own interest to accept it. Every imaginable reason is alleged against admitting ladies to a share in this work. Religious differences are brought forward in some cases as an insuperable objection; and universally, it may be said, the feeling of the guardians is against it, and in favour of closing the workhouse

* See *Letter*, p. 54, *Metropolitan Workhouses and their Inmates.*

† Everywhere we hear of gentlemen resigning their posts as guardians, because of the opposition of the majority, whose ignorance and vulgarity cannot be tolerated by them. It is the same in the country as in towns, the ill-educated and narrow-minded have the upper hand, and generally succeed in their endeavours to get rid of their opponents. The following is the description of the state of things existing in the union of a distant country town:—"I can hardly conceive anything more hopeless than the management of our union. There is *not one gentleman* in all this country-side who takes any part as guardian in the administration of affairs. Some did at first, years ago, but they were defeated by the determined and systematic tactics of the farmers, who wished to get the management entirely into their own hands, and the consequence was, most unfortunately, that all the gentlemen retired in disgust. From that day to this, the farmers have had it all their own way. The chairman is a small farmer in this parish, and our guardian is a most unfit person, of bad character, but nevertheless is much thought of both by the other guardians and by the Poor Law Board, *because he is a capital hand at keeping down the rates.* We all know what this means, when applied to the poor, the aged, and the infirm." It is justly asked, "What co-operation could be expected in any system of lady visitors from such persons as these?"

doors to all but official inspection and management. Whether Government will give its aid and sanction in this matter, or leave the contest with public opinion, to be fought, step by step, during a gradual process of years, remains to be seen. We have even heard of the wife of a bishop being refused admission as a visitor into a neighbouring union; and in cases where it is permitted to a few ladies to enter, it is done as it were by stealth, and to be ignored by the guardians is all that is hoped for or expected.* If masters are in the least disposed to dislike the "interference," as it is called, they have full power to make a complaint to the guardians, who invariably listen to their story, and the visitors are probably dismissed.† Even gentlemen have been treated in this manner, without the opportunity of making a defence. We fear, therefore, that the hope expressed a year ago on this point is still far from being realized. ‡

The following extract gives the result of one instance in which a lady missionary was permitted to visit the apparently hopeless inmates of a workhouse, and it shews what one loving and disinterested heart may do, though boards of guardians still desire to ignore the testimony, and deem themselves, or at least one chaplain, all-sufficient for the work:—

"In the course of the past year eighty-four visits have been paid to the workhouse, where the Scriptures and religious books have been read to more than a thousand persons, and where the kind reception she meets with shews how highly valued her visits are. There she is enabled not only to visit the sick and aged, but to penetrate into the depths of their sin and misery, and to carry light and hope into the midst of darkness and despair. Softened and brought to their senses by long seclusion, and longing to lead a better life when they leave it, they are ready to

* Ratepayers have no more privileges of admission than any other visitors, and must keep to the visiting days.

† We would repeat here that there will be far less reason to dread interference and confusion from the visits of ladies, if they are authorized by the guardians and chaplain, than if they are made, as at present, in a desultory way, without any supervision or co-operation from those in authority. Occasionally, when the visits of ladies have been hinted at, masters have replied that if such were permitted they should resign their posts! What can more clearly prove that there are some things which women would discover to be wrong? We do not think it is flattering to the women with whom these men associate that they express so much dread of the "interference" of the other sex.

‡ "There is no lack of institutions, the doors of which will be thrown wide open to our English ladies as soon as they knock at them. We are not yet prepared to say that the workhouse is one of them. There may be some prejudice and exclusiveness to contend against at the outset. Doubtless there are vested interests in misrule, any interference with which will be proclaimed unpardonable heresy. But they cannot last long. The good sense and good feeling of the many must prevail over the selfishness and intolerance of the few. We are becoming every day more and more alive to the fact that what is called 'efficient control' is for the most part very inefficient in respect of the practical development of the workhouse system, as every humane person would desire to see it developed."—"Employment of Women:" *North British Review*, Feb. 1857.

listen as little children to the Word of Life, and look for the visits of their teacher, as one of them said, 'as if she was our mother.'"

We may conclude with the hope that many will be induced to "go and do likewise," and with an earnest desire that guardians may in time learn to see that it is their interest as well as their duty to encourage the visits of those who are able to undertake and carry out a work which, with the best intentions, they would be unable themselves to perform. We trust that a better day has begun to dawn upon the dreary night of workhouse management, and that our non-criminal poor may ere long receive a share of that benevolent zeal and interest which is now so largely bestowed upon the criminal portion of our population.

A PAPER

ON THE

CONDITION OF WORKHOUSES,

Read in the Department of Social Economy, at the Association for the Promotion of Social Science, Birmingham.

HAVING very recently collected all the information I could obtain in the form of a pamphlet on the subject of Workhouses and their management, I hardly thought it likely that I could offer any new suggestions for the consideration of the present meeting. I have found, however, such a generally-awakened interest in the cause, and so many persons ready to furnish facts and observations from their own experience, that I am not without a hope that these remarks may prove of some value to the important subject of the treatment of our poor under the present poor-law system. It is satisfactory to find that the various opinions I have received from different quarters may be said to be unanimous as to the existing evils, and nearly so as to the suggested remedies. When this is the case, and public feeling is once aroused and expressed, there is much ground for hope that such suggestions will be adopted and carried out. Some few have indeed confessed that they feared the difficulty was an insurmountable one, and the problem insoluble, to make kindness and humanity and comfort compatible with the strict economy which is necessary when charity is granted and bestowed by law. But I think these remarks were made by persons who were the least acquainted with the subject practically, and I hope to be able to show that increased expenditure is by no means the chief aim of those who are earnest in the cause of workhouse reform, or necessarily involved in their suggestions. Neither do they violently denounce the system itself, which is very probably less to be blamed than the manner in which it is carried out. No extreme measures or alterations in the rules are demanded, but rather a calm and quiet investigation into the workings of

a system that has been for more than twenty years on trial; for, however carefully it may have been framed, it cannot be unreasonable now to look at its results more closely than we have ever done before. Up to this time the whole matter may be said to have been carried on "with closed doors;" and but little was known of the proceedings within, save by the poor inmates themselves, whom few thought of listening to, and the guardians and officials, who reserved to themselves the entire management, under the impression that whatever influence was forced upon them from without, was an interference with their rights and liberties, and productive of evil rather than of good.

It is true that there were dawnings of an interest in the subject, as long ago as the publication of Dickens's tale of the sorrows and sufferings of poor "Oliver Twist," the workhouse boy. But the instances of workhouse management, or rather *mis*-management, given there, fitted on to no one's experience; no one knew how much of it to believe, and it was deemed at all events a highly-coloured picture. There was, however, much truth for a foundation, and though we may hope that few, if any, exactly resemble Mr. and Mrs. Bumble, they might be considered as types of the class they represented. We cannot have forgotten the outcry of indignation that was raised at the discovery of the iniquities practised upon the pauper children at Tooting not many years ago, and more recently there have been the revelations of proceedings at the St. Pancras and Marylebone workhouses, which have perhaps done more than anything else to bring the whole matter forward into light. Up to that time there was no general interest awakened on the subject, and only a few persons here and there thought of the existence of the thousands who were shut up within the walls of buildings close to their own doors; in old workhouses, dim and dreary looking, still retained for their original purpose, or in new ones, grand and pompous castles or palaces, as repulsive, perhaps, to the humble dwellers in cottages or single rooms, the one as the other. But the subject was already working far down below the surface, and in due time the thoughts germinating there sprung up into the light of day. One of the first publications concerning workhouses, was a pamphlet inquiring "Why our Union Workhouses should not be Houses of Mercy," considering they were intended for the poor of a Christian land. Few persons took notice of this solitary voice raised in behalf of an apparently hopeless subject, and the publishers told me that hardly any copies were sold; but it was the first thing that directed my attention to it, and it probably did some good. In 1849, Dr. Sieveking wrote a pamphlet on the subject of training nurses from the inmates of workhouses, a point which seems to be again attracting some public notice at the present time, after an interval of eight years.

On my first visit to a large London workhouse many years ago, I was struck by the hopeless and depressing character of the institution, though at that time a kind and excellent master and matron superintended it. They willingly accepted my offer to go again to visit a poor sick woman to whom I had spoken, and from that time I resolved to do something, if possible, to mend such a state of things. To obtain visitors to the neglected inmates, especially to the ignorant and miserable women, seemed the first and most obvious remedy, and this point has remained my chief object ever since, though five years' endeavours have not succeeded in removing the obstacles to this plan. I cannot further trace the various steps by which the subject has advanced to the present time, when considerable attention is directed towards it. In Parliament it has found some sympathy, and it is now brought before a meeting, the aim and object of which is to discuss the most important questions relating to social science, and from the deliberations of which we may look for great results.

It may be a fact to be lamented that there should be so large a proportion of our countrymen and women who are compelled to resort to charity for assistance, and even maintenance. But if it is a fact, the only question is how to deal with it, so that it should not become still more lamentable by the manner in which it is treated. "The workhouse" has become a by-word for all that is degraded, scorned, and outcast, and seems to imply a loss of self-respect in every one belonging to it. The humblest school-boy and girl look down upon the "workhouse" child. The poorest women object to certain kinds of clothing for their children, because it is like the "workhouse dress." Some persons think this all very right, and desirable that it should be so. It seems to me a great evil, and to imply blame to us in some way that 600,000 persons should be living in a condition which has this sort of feeling attached to it. Is it because it is a crime in itself to be poor, or because the way in which we treat poverty has led persons to think it so? Or is it because we relieve those who do not need or deserve relief, and so have continually the feeling that we are imposed upon? It is only from some such reason that I can account for the very prevalent state of feeling with regard to workhouses and their inmates. The simple fact that every country has, ever has had, and I suppose ever must have, a certain portion of poor, helpless and unable to maintain themselves from a variety of causes, is surely too widely acknowledged to be doubted. If so, the fact is equally clear that they must be helped. And we *do* help them, it is true, and boast of the system by which no one in this Christian land can die of want. I may mention here, however, that I believe no winter ever passes without our reading in the papers that there are

persons who *do* die of destitution in this charitable metropolis. It is true they might no doubt have applied to the workhouse; but do we never read also of refusals to relieve, and coarse rejection of the destitute when they do apply for parish relief? And when relief *is* bestowed, is it not too often with the hard hand of necessity, not of brotherly love and charity? "Relief is flung to the poor by law, not given in love," was the remark once made of our system of public charity. And this seems the more remarkable, when we find no other country so prominent for its endless forms of charity. No kind of sorrow or misfortune or suffering is known to exist, but Englishmen rush forward to its relief. Yet for the wants and sorrows of this one portion of their fellow-creatures, they have seemed neither to think nor care. An interest in them has been limited to those few who have visited inmates of the workhouses, old acquaintances probably, whose prospects in entering have been cheered by the promise of a visit from a friend. In this way only have the visits of ladies here and there been permitted; for the care of this class has been thought to belong entirely to the "guardians of the poor," who were supposed to be in reality what their name implied.

I shall now endeavour, as briefly as I can, to put together the opinions and suggestions I have received from various quarters, in the hope that they may fall upon the willing ears of some who may have also the power of carrying them out into practice.

I have said that the feeling about the existence of grievances seems to be unanimous. They are not imaginary evils that we are dealing with, but such as all thinking and benevolent men and women believe demand earnest attention and speedy remedy. The following opinions of eminent men will confirm this. One says (speaking of a remedy), "That which seems chiefly necessary is that kind and degree of publicity in these institutions which is obtained by the free admission of non-official persons. This is one of the chief advantages of medical schools in hospitals, many of which, but for the schools, would soon be as bad as workhouses." Another believes that "workhouses are as much 'habitations of cruelty' as any other recesses where unlimited power prevails, and where the victims have no friends. The officials hate inspection and interference, and every difficulty will be thrown in the way. A good, sustained system of visitation would produce most happy effects." Another says, "You have grappled with an evil which most sorely needs a remedy, and the remedies proposed by you are the only ones which will be effectual."

In the next place, I may be allowed to give a few instances of mismanagement which have come under my own observation, and that of my friends who have had experience in the matter, to prove that we do *not* complain of imaginary grievances. And

then I will give a few of the suggestions which would provide remedies for the present state of things.

First, as to the *hardships* and *grievances*, and their *consequences.*

Perhaps, the chief grievance of all is the employment of incompetent officials, especially the choice of masters and matrons unfitted for their work by any previous training, or knowledge of the poor and their ways; and also the employment of pauper nurses, under no sufficient superintendence or control, for the visit once a day of the matron virtually leaves them to themselves in their treatment of their patients. Let us hear what the poor-law rule itself says as to this point. "With respect to the use of pauper servants, they require the strictest superintendence on the part of the master and other officers. The employment of paupers in *offices of trust* is inexpedient, inasmuch as it tends to impair the discipline of the house. In offices of mere labour, which can be performed *under trustworthy superintendence,* paupers may be useful. Where responsibility is involved, *paid servants* should be engaged." Are not the entire charge of a sick ward, the kitchen or laundry for many hundred persons, posts of responsibility? And if so, why are they left entirely to the management of pauper inmates, as in so many cases? It is evident that those who framed the poor-law rules contemplated the very possible abuse of power that would ensue; but even all their precautions and warnings have failed to avert the evil.

Instances of such are only too numerous. In one infirmary where no paid nurse is employed, the pauper nurse is continually being changed; she has one helper, and no extra person at night. The present nurse has a bad leg, which has disabled her from hospital work; she is continually grumbling at her occupation and situation, and says she would never stay if she could do anything else.

One poor old woman has been bedridden for years, and her hands are nearly useless, and the fingers bent inwards. A lady observed her long finger nails, and asked why they were not cut? She said she could not get it done without paying for it. She offered to cut them for her, but the old woman would not hear of it, and evidently thought it would make the nurses suspect she had been telling tales of them. She said she had to gnaw her potato at dinner like a dog, for no one would cut it up for her. She had been kept awake for two nights by the groans of a dying neighbour in the next bed. She said of the nurse, "You have no idea of the language she uses; it is so low I could not repeat it." She was many times deterred from receiving the Holy Communion, because she said the conduct of the nurse was so intolerable, both before and directly afterwards, that she could not compose her mind for it.

The *consequence* of such treatment is, of course, that the poor naturally avoid the union infirmary, if possible, and prefer the hospitals, which are intended for *curable* cases, not for those that are hopeless, either from the nature of the illness, or old age. Persons often come for admission to the hospital who are quite suitable for the union, but some say they would rather die than go there. We may be quite sure that persons will never sham illness to be taken into the union infirmary, therefore *there*, at least, there can be no fear of making things "too comfortable;" as it is, there is no lack of inmates; let there, at least, in all cases, be *one* responsible and paid nurse placed over them. The case of the children whose deaths were occasioned by the nurses' stealing the nourishing food intended for them, has probably been read by many in the papers. The following evidence as to the interior of a workhouse was given by a young inmate of a superior class, whose word can be thoroughly trusted. At one time she was in the sick ward for a month, and during that time saw the matron once; lately she has been in the "insane ward" for a fortnight, because she had fits, such patients being always placed there; while there a fortnight she saw the matron twice. She described the behaviour of the master and matron as coarse and tyrannical. She was able to occupy herself at intervals, and a kind lady who visited her took some needlework to amuse her weary hours; it was taken from her by the matron, and she was not allowed to do anything, nor to receive books from her friend. She heard and saw a good deal of the treatment of the inmates; an old woman of eighty was abused by the master in the coarsest terms, and dragged across the yard, because she answered him; he ended by sending her off to prison for a fortnight. The searching of the inmates is carried on in the most offensive manner, frequently (of the women) in the presence of the master. They are allowed to possess *nothing;* the nurses are paid sixpence a week, and when they go out with any savings in their pockets it is taken from them. The master gives his own version of everything to the guardians, who will not listen to the poor themselves. It was a frequent remark that things were much better in prisons; cocoa was allowed in them, here hot or cold water for all under sixty; the bread was bad, and lumps of alum frequently found in it. Frequently no sitting room is provided for the women after working hours; so after tea, at five, if they do not choose to go to bed, they must sit in the yard, or on the stairs, as I have often seen them do. Not even a cup or saucepan was allowed; so, though she had tea given her, she could not use it. And there were no boxes; so books and tracts lent to the inmates are kept under the mattress—a most unpleasant practice. In one workhouse the warm garments of the inmates are taken away, without others being supplied; an old man of

eighty was deprived of flannel, and when his old mistress supplied him with new, that was taken away. One dying woman sat up in bed constantly, with no covering on her shoulders, and when something was given her for this purpose, it was taken away by the matron.

It would be endless to give all the cases of harshness and injustice that have come before me. One of the most pernicious *consequences* of all this is the preference of the *prison* to the workhouse. There is generally better diet and better treatment there, the officials being of a superior class. The present Lady Mayoress says, that she was first led to think about the management of workhouses, from being one of a committee for visiting prisons, when she frequently was told by the women and young girls, that they would rather be there than in the workhouse. Probably even such degraded characters feel what it is to be treated with *justice* and *dignity*.

Surely this is the strongest argument of all for some amendment in the management; either our workhouses must be made more comfortable, or our prisons less so. The chaplain of a prison says, "It is almost heart-breaking to witness the number of poor creatures who come to prison in preference to the union, or because the obtaining what they require from the latter place is beset with so much difficulty and delay. It is not only an anomalous state of things, but highly discreditable to a Christian country, that a poor man should be led, as is frequently the case, to seek necessary food and shelter in a prison. We have frequently men and women suffering under diseases, who come to prison for the express purpose of getting that relief, in the way of medicine and nourishing food, which they have sought in vain from the workhouse, their own parish being, perhaps, miles away, and which they cannot themselves afford.

Superintendence of a responsible kind is needed, not only in the infirmary, but in every department of the house; in the *kitchen* more especially. I have just seen a proof of this in an account of proceedings in one of our large London workhouses, which ended in the dismissal of the cook. The broth for the sick was found to be hot water with oatmeal floating on it, and the soup was declared by the guardians to be unfit for use; the bones and meat were nowhere to be found, and had doubtless gone to make soup for others than the inmates for whom it was intended.

Without any increase of expenditure how much might be done in the cooking department, by one who really understood the matter of cheap and good cookery, for the comfort of thousands who now loathe their daily food, and consequently often subsist for days solely upon the tea and bread.* The patience with

* Many old people are quite unable to eat either the soup or solid suet pudding.

which such a fact as this has been told me, has often surprised me. Several poor creatures have said to me that they were weary of their lives, they had nothing to live for, they even hoped they might not live to see me again on my return from a short absence, and they longed for death to release them from their trials. Who can wonder at this, after spending years helpless on a sick bed, with literally no variety from day to day? Others, not bed-ridden, sit round the walls, vacant and dreary, with no occupation beyond the two or three well-worn books, which some tell me they know by heart; and probably in every ward there are several who cannot read at all, from blindness or infirmity. If these things could only be *seen* it would need little persuasion to touch the hearts of those who hear this, and persuade them to introduce some element of mercy into these abodes.

Then, as to the point of *out-door relief*, perhaps the most difficult of all. The very great reluctance to give it, and the desire to invite persons into the house *as a test* (as it is said), mainly arises from the conviction that great imposition is practised. The master of a union, a good and conscientious man, who enters into his work with some intelligence, tells me he cannot understand the reason for wishing to incur the far greater expense of entire maintenance rather than bestow *partial relief;* it seems to be supposed that persons must be either wholly destitute (the only conditions under which any one would enter), or else need no help at all, whereas in the greater number of cases *assistance*, and not *maintenance* is needed, and that probably only temporarily, except, of course, in a few cases of helpless widows, &c. All this appears to me to arise from the want of a thorough and trustworthy investigation into the cases requiring aid. Would it not be worth while to *try* the plan of enlisting some voluntary helps for this work? Might not district visitors come to the aid of "relieving officers," whose visits are often dreaded by the decent poor? They cannot object to this, because their plan is perfect and successful. The two following cases have just come before a board of guardians. One person had been receiving out-door relief for sixteen months, and was at last discovered to have been in the weekly average receipt of twenty-one shillings! Another had for some time received six shillings a week relief; *he* was found to have been receiving a weekly sum of three pounds! Could not the clergy or district visitors have given help in such cases as these? A poor woman whom I had long visited was compelled to go into the union at seventy years of age, worn out with weakness and a heart complaint, brought on by constant stooping over needlework. When I visited her in the union, to my surprise I found her in the "shed," with the able-bodied, and there she stayed for a fort-

night before she was removed to the infirm ward. She told me she could not describe her sufferings in this shed, with a brick floor and benches, where hair and oakum are picked; there were "the sweepings of six parishes," she said, and the language and behaviour were fearful; she was also placed to sleep with another woman, and she thought she should have died the first night—she did not dare to go to sleep with this fear. Surely this was a case which might have received a little more care and attention, if anything had been known of her previous character, and I had been allowed to say a word about her.

Governors and officials will always look coldly upon any voluntary aid; but surely there has been proof lately that it is unwise to do so, and that the fears and suspicions of its failure are unjust.

On the introduction of a spirit of love and devotion into this hard machinery, rest the chief hopes of those who look for any improvement in the system. Opinions on this point are unanimous. Amongst the various letters I have received, the following is perhaps one of the most useful, from the clearness and practical nature of its suggestions. It is from a clergyman who was for two years chaplain to the large union of a country town.

"In the hope that it may prove of some service, I will state what appeared to me defects in the system as carried on at C——.

"The first great defect is in regard to the *chaplain*. Every union ought to have a chaplain *entirely* to itself, and not, as is too often the case, share one with a neighbouring parish. The miserable stipend which is offered by the guardians renders it impossible for any man to devote his whole time to the paupers. At this time I believe it is 50*l.* per annum; when I was first elected it was but 40*l.*, and previously only 30*l.* It is, therefore, absolutely necessary that the chaplain should have some other cure, which prevents his giving more than one Sunday service in the union; an arrangement as unfair to the chaplain himself, as to those committed to his charge. Imagine a man having to look after his parish Sunday schools, with one whole duty, and sharing two others, having, besides, to officiate at the union, situated more than a mile from the church! and in the week the care of 2,000 souls, besides the union! Yet this was exactly my case. I maintain, therefore, that the chaplain ought to have no other duty than the union.

"2. The second defect I will mention relates to the *Lying-in Ward*. The causes which make it necessary for persons to apply for admission to our unions are, I expect, mainly these: amongst the able-bodied—drunkenness in the men, sins of unchastity in the women. There are, of course, exceptions to this rule. And the very exceptions prove the evil. Good and bad—honest and

dishonest, are treated exactly alike. The mother of the lawful child, and the mother of the illegitimate one, are confined side by side, which is as injurious to the one as the other. The *honest* mother feels somewhat of the disgrace, and the other loses all sense of shame. Visitors entering the ward regard them *both* as mothers of a child of shame. Is this fair to either of them? Besides, it may be that a young girl, the victim of deceit, enters the house, ashamed of her condition, and sorrowing for her sin. And what happens? Turned away from her home, she is thrust into a ward full of *habitually* sinful women, who laugh at her simplicity, and too often shame her out of her repentance. When, therefore, she is transferred to the Lying-in Ward, what hope is there that the ministrations of the chaplain can take effect? In this, and in other wards where bad women are assembled, the chaplain is well-nigh useless, because he cannot see them one by one, and so, directly his back is turned, his godly exhortations are jeered at, and his advice treated with contempt. How, under such circumstances, is it possible to reclaim even one of such outcasts?

"3. With the diet I had but little acquaintance, but it certainly struck me as excessively hard upon the *aged* inmates, that nothing but *water* was allowed them as their dinner drink. Half a pint of the smallest small beer would help to cheer them up, and make them look forward with pleasure to one meal at least in the day. For some time, indeed, this *luxury* was allowed them, but was afterwards discontinued by order of the Poor-Law Board.

"4. Some difference of treatment and more liberty, might be given with advantage to the old and infirm. That the place should be made as uncomfortable as possible to the young and able-bodied may be necessary, but to those who are well-nigh worn out, it should surely be a *resting-place!* yet even for the younger inmates the union should be at least *as comfortable as the county gaol.*

"5. Lastly, if each union had a *resident* chaplain, *gentlemen* as guardians, *ladies* as authorized visitors, and a *master* with a higher salary, much good might be brought to pass. I should, besides, like to see it ordered that the master and matron had their meals in the hall with the inmates. This would effect a change both in regard to the conduct of the poor, and condition of the food. If some useful employments were introduced among the more infirm, and even some innocent games, puzzles, &c., it would tend to relieve the tedium and monotony of their lives. A reading-room and library might be added with great advantage."

The point of the *classification* of the inmates is, of course, so fundamentally important, and it has been so strongly enforced by the poor-law rules, that it is surprising it should still be so

imperfectly attended to. The expense in this case for better accommodation, once incurred, would be for ever; and there can be no doubt that an ultimate saving of expense would result, from the prevention of contamination, and consequent pauperism of many of the inmates. In many London workhouses a better arrangement is earnestly desired, but is impossible from want of space. The following is the desire of the Poor-law Commissioners on this point: "It is desirable that females of dissolute and disorderly habits should be separated from those of a better character, inasmuch as it is the duty of the guardians to take all reasonable care that the morals of persons admitted into the house be not corrupted by intercourse with inmates of this description." Yet, I suppose there is hardly a workhouse where this advice is strictly obeyed.

As the point of *committees* of *visiting ladies* has been dwelt upon, it may be well to mention that the plan *has* been adopted in two London workhouses; in that of St. Pancras (containing 2,000 inmates) for nearly two years, and in the West London Union it is just organized. In the first, the plan has met with decided success; in the other there is every prospect of it. The labours of the former committee are not limited to spiritual matters, but their attention is invited to other points as well, and their suggestions are cordially received by the guardians. At the *first* meeting of the West London Union Committee, the opinion of the ladies was asked by the medical man, and one of the guardians, as to the desirableness of engaging a paid nurse to superintend the sick wards; and, though in itself a small and trifling matter, I may add that the matron immediately asked the help of the ladies in providing her with rag for the sick, for which she was often in great distress.

As to the *employment of the inmates* of workhouses, many suggestions have been made, but beyond needlework, and hair and oakum picking, nothing is, I believe, provided. The objection to proposals for further employment will, probably, be the want of space for anything like workshops, in which the men might follow, temporarily, their former occupations or trades. Many would be thankful to be employed in some such way. In Paris I was much struck with the sight of a long workshop in the Hospice or Asylum for Incurable Men (containing 500 inmates), filled with persons following their former avocations. Whether much money is gained by their labour or not, it seemed at any rate a merciful arrangement, to give them the opportunity of employing themselves if they are able, which many even of the aged would be. And as to the unfairness of taking work from honest labourers out of doors, I do not see that this can be made an objection, for needlework is already done by the women for the shops as well as for private orders. It cannot be intended

that any persons who *can* work, if ever so little, should live in continual idleness, and consequent misery. If there was more time for discrimination and individual knowledge on the part of the matron, there would be many of the aged found able to do small jobs of work, who are not able to go into the work-room. In one London union the master kindly and judiciously employs the men in doing all the work of repairs, &c., required in the house, such as painting, white-washing, carpentering, and a large expense is thus saved to the parish.

It seems to be always considered a virtue that all are treated alike in workhouses, without distinction of classes or individuals. But is it really right and just that it should be so? Why should not some difference be made between the mere pauper, and those who have been housekeepers, and therefore ratepayers in the parish? Such persons are here and there fortunate enough to obtain admission into almshouses, some of which are of a very superior description, but the *few* only can hope for this refuge for their last days. As it is not considered a crime in those who accept the charity of an almshouse, why should not some better treatment be reserved for those of the same class who are reduced to accept the charity of a workhouse, and who have in their turn contributed to the support of the poor in their parish? There would be no jealousy caused by such a proceeding, for all would see the justice of it, and know it was those only who had formerly been in the position of householders who received superior privileges. I think it is impossible to deny that unavoidable misfortune may overtake this class as well as every other of the community. By one of the poor-law rules, "the appointment of an honest and efficient porter is of the utmost importance." Of the behaviour of some of these officials, the tales I could tell would hardly be believed. I have myself been subjected to the rudest treatment when, on the appointment of a new one, I have not been known. Another lady was treated even worse. She asked one day to speak to the chaplain about a patient whom she visited, when she was told by the porter that "the chaplain did not see young women at the workhouse—if she wished to see him she must go to his own house!" I only mention these instances of coarseness and vulgarity, because I wish to show the *tone and spirit* which pervade these institutions, and if such is the treatment of *ladies*, what must that of the *poor* be? But such conduct is not confined to porters. In one instance a lady went as usual to visit a poor old friend who was dying, when the master told her she could only go on the visiting days (*to the sick* such rules are ordered to be dispensed with), and on her remonstrating, he said, "Mrs. R. might be interesting to *her*, but she was no more to him than the others, and she could only go once a week to see her."

As to the question of *removing workhouses* out of London, which has lately been suggested in some quarters, I would only remark that from my experience such a change would tend to make them still more dreaded than they are at present; the main objection being, that the poor would be more out of reach of their friends, whose visits in many cases can be their only consolation. And here I cannot help remarking on the cruelty of refusing admission to visitors on Sundays, a very general practice in London, that being the only day on which working people can visit their friends. I have known even a clergyman refused admission to a poor sick woman twice on a Sunday, and the custom leads to great and unnecessary cruelty. In conclusion, it may be useful to quote a few of the rules of the Poor-Law Board, that it may be seen how far *they* are to blame for the many grievances we have been considering, especially in this case of the visiting, for which I think the guardians are clearly responsible.

"Any person may visit any pauper in the workhouse by permission of the master or matron, subject to such conditions and restrictions as the guardians may prescribe," and in a note it is added—"This article allows any pauper to receive the visit of a stranger, but requires that, except in the case of a *sick* pauper, the interview shall take place in a separate room, and in presence of the master or matron." The reasons for this are then given, and are obvious—such as the fear of the introduction of spirits by visitors—the dangers of male visitors to the women, and of private interviews; "accordingly this restriction is not intended to offer any obstacle to the innocent and proper visits of relations and friends. It is desirable that there should be fixed days of the week on which visits should be allowed, and that they should not, *in general*, be visited on other days, *except* in cases of sickness and necessity." Surely these rules could never have been intended to be applied to such cases of refusal as those above mentioned! Is not a discretion expressly allowed to the officials by the following explanation? "Under this article the guardians may permit the visit of any person for any lawful purpose to any sick pauper inmate, subject to such conditions and restrictions as they may think fit to impose." And as to the refusal to lend books, it is said that the "prohibition extends *only* to books of an *improper tendency*, or likely to produce insubordination." The rules require the utmost care to be exercised in the selection of officials, especially of the master and matron; it would be instructive and almost amusing in some cases (if the matter were not too serious), to obtain information as to the previous training and occupations of these superintendents of our London workhouses alone; the variety would be great, but the total unfitness as to habits and education, and formation of character

in a large proportion, would be apparent to every unprejudiced person.* The poor-law rule warns such officials that "warmth of temper and passionate conduct generally betray a consciousness of want of firmness. The commissioners are desirous that all the master's duties should be discharged with the strictest regard to propriety. The habits of many of the inmates will often be coarse and depraved, but the conduct of every officer of such an establishment should correspond with what those habits ought to be, rather than with what they actually are." One of the master's duties is "to take care that no pauper at the approach of death shall be left unattended, either during the day or night." How often all these rules are broken or evaded, every one must be aware who believes all that has been said of the interiors of workhouses. Passionate temper and abusive language, there is every reason to believe, is a common style of behaviour towards the paupers, and all the rules and injunctions in the world will prove quite ineffectual to guard against such abuses of power, if persons from a vulgar and uneducated class continue to be selected for such posts of responsibility, where "temper and discretion and integrity are required for the judicious discharge of its duties."

Amongst sixteen rules laid down for the guidance of the matron, one of her duties is said to be "to visit the sleeping wards of the female paupers every day at eleven, and all the wards of the females and children every night before nine." Whether this *might* be done or not by the overworked matron, with many hundreds or thousands under her charge, I cannot say, but I know that often it is *not* done at all.

The following words, written with regard to *prison* management, are equally applicable to that of workhouses, and till the truth they inculcate be heeded, all our hopes of reform will be in vain. "Fallen men, to be elevated and humanized, must be dealt with as men and brothers, not as brutes and slaves. Whether this golden rule has, in all cases, been followed as strictly by the inferior as by the superior officers"—(here, alas! there are few, if any, "superior officers")—"and whether there can be sufficient security for its general observance until these offices are occupied by a higher class of men, acting on higher motives, and with a special training for their duties, is an important subject of inquiry, to which it will be needful that public attention should be directed." The lower, the more hopeless and degraded the class we have to manage and elevate, the more zeal, patience, devotion and courage must there be in the governors, and there-

* It has been suggested that officers, either of the army or navy, would be well fitted for these posts; but experience has, I believe, proved that this is not the case; the strict discipline that is necessary and desirable in prisons, cannot, for obvious reasons, be carried out in workhouses.

fore all arguments about the low character of our workhouse population, only go to prove the truth of what is now so strongly and earnestly urged upon the attention of all enlightened and benevolent men, who will not turn a deaf ear to the wants and sorrows, and, I may add, *rights* of the poor and destitute, and of him who hath no helper.

Political Economists and Poor-Law Commissioners call it "meddling" when any voice is raised in behalf of this neglected class, and we are told that we know nothing of the matter. But it remains to be seen if such is the *general* feeling of Englishmen and Englishwomen, many of whom probably know as much of the poor, and their needs and habits, as a few gentlemen of the upper classes who have had little or no personal intercourse with them. In such a cause truth and love will prevail; and while taking every care to train our youth of both sexes in the strictest principles of economy and prudence, we may at the same time believe that as long as the world lasts, there will ever be the *unavoidable* cases of poverty and suffering, and old age, which may claim a tenderer treatment from a Christian nation than they at present receive.

At a Meeting of the Committee of the Social Economy Department of the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE PROMOTION OF SOCIAL SCIENCE, held at the Office of the Association, 3, Waterloo Place, Pall Mall, on *Monday, June 7th,* 1858, the Report of the Sub-Committee on Workhouses having been read—

1. Resolved, that the Report be received.

2. That it is desirable to obtain a more efficient superintendence over the internal management of Workhouses than now exists in the great majority of these establishments.

3. That the inmates of Workhouses ought to be far more carefully classified than at present, as to sex, age, and character, and that children especially should always be entirely separated from adult paupers.

4. That industrial training and occupation should be more extensively introduced.

5. That a system of inspection by unpaid, and especially Lady Visitors, sanctioned by the Guardians, would be calculated to improve the internal condition of Workhouses.

6. That for the furtherance of the views expressed above, the Committee of this department will sanction the establishment of a WORKHOUSE VISITING SOCIETY.